AFAR BEGINS THIRD YEAR

AFAR, after several years of planning, is now in its third year of official activity. A professional central office staff is in place. Our legal status is secure and IRS Codes permit contributions to AFAR to be tax deductible. [Section 501 (c)(3)]

We are tackling the greatest health problem of today and the coming years—the innumerable and complex disabilities of the aging population. Many of these diseases can only be resolved through intensive research following the model of what has been done with high blood pressure, polio, tuberculosis, and rheumatic heart disease, to mention a few success stories. Building new nursing homes, which seems to be our present limited approach, will not solve the basic problems involved with aging anymore than the sanitariums did for tuberculosis. Sound basic and critical clinical research is the only hope. Although we cannot predict the degree and the speed of success in research, even a few achievements in the areas of senile dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, chronic arthritis, osteoporosis, arteriosclerosis, macular degeneration, and other typical problems can improve the lives of millions of our elderly citizens and diminish health costs.

Even with some encouraging results by dedicated scientists, the resources dedicated to research have been minuscule, given the magnitude of the problem. AFAR will strive to correct this situation. We know it will not be easy, but the American Heart Association and the Cancer Society both had early difficulties and yet have become enormously important factors in the health of this country.

With new members joining us each day, AFAR is well on its way.

ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR APRIL 17, 1982

The Research Committee has announced the following professional program for the Annual Meeting, preceding the meeting of the American College of Physicians, to be held on April 17, 1982, at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia. The program will feature present status and future plans and directions for new research.

Blood Sugar and Aging
George F. Cahill, Jr., M.D.
Director of Research
Howard Hughes Medical Institute
Professor of Medicine, Harvard

Dementia in the Aged
Robert Katzman, M.D.
Professor and Chairman
Department of Neurology
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Yeshiva University

Cell Biology of Aging
Vincent J. Cristofalo, M.D.
Professor, The Wistar Institute
Professor of Biochemistry
The University of Pennsylvania

Immune Defects and Aging
Marc E. Weksler, M.D.
Wright Professor of Medicine
Director, Division of Geriatrics
and Gerontology
Cornell Medical College
OFFICERS ELECTED

The following officers have been elected: Irving S. Wright, M.D., Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Cornell University Medical College, President; Fred D. Thompson, Vice-President of Marketing, Madison Paper Industries, Chairman of the Board; Carl Eisdorfer, Ph.D., M.D., President, Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center, Vice President; Lowell F. Johnson, Consultant to the Corporation, American Home Products, Vice Chairman of the Board; and Theodore R. Reiff, M.D., Director of the Institute of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine, University of North Dakota, Secretary.

A strong Board of Directors has been selected which reflects not only nationwide distribution, but broad interdisciplinary expertise. Many of the directors are leaders in the fields of geriatrics, gerontology, and related disciplines who have been drawn together by recognition of the need for a unified effort to support basic biomedical and critical clinical research in these areas.

During the past year, a number of distinguished lay leaders have joined, but there is need for the enlistment of additional leaders in the public sector, especially from the Mid-West, Far West, Texas, and Florida. Nominations of outstanding candidates, with supporting data, should be forwarded to the National Office.

COMMITTEES BEGIN OPERATIONS

A number of committees have been established to carry out the mission of AFAR. The Committees on Research, Membership, and Affiliations have begun their work. Other committees are in formation.

Membership

Among those who work in gerontology, geriatrics, and related fields, there has been tremendous interest in what AFAR is doing. Board Member, Lawrence L. Feigenbaum, M.D., Medical Training Director, Geriatric Services, Mount Zion Hospital and Medical Center, San Francisco, has accepted the Chairmanship of the Membership Committee. Membership in the AFAR Public and Scientific Councils is unlimited. Council members may be involved in developing geographic affiliates as well as in making personal contributions for the advancement of AFAR. Persons interested in membership are invited to contact the National Office.

Research

The Committee on Research, headed by Board Member, John P. Blass, M.D., Ph.D. Director, Dementia Research Services, Burke Rehabilitation Center, is in the process of formulating guidelines for the distribution of funds for the support of biomedical research and the development of a scientific program for the next annual meeting, to be held in Philadelphia, April 17, 1982. (See Page 1).

Affiliations

A geographic type of affiliation is also planned, and already inquiries have been received from interested groups in Ohio, California, Washington, Virginia, Missouri, Louisiana, Kansas, Wisconsin, New York, and Massachusetts. A committee on Affiliation, headed by Board Member, Roy L. Donnerberg, M.D., Co-Director, Office of Geriatrics and Gerontology, Ohio State University, is developing an appropriate formula for geographic affiliation, following the excellent pattern of similar national organizations.
OFFICERS ELECTED

The following officers have been elected: Irving S. Wright, M.D., Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Cornell University Medical College, President; Fred D. Thompson, Vice-President of Marketing, Madison Paper Company, President of the Board; Carl Eisdonfer, Ph.D., M.D., President, Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center, Vice President; Lowell F. Johnson, Consultant to the Corporation, American Home Products, Vice Chairman of the Board; and Theodore R. Reiff, M.D., Director of the Institute of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine, University of North Dakota, Secretary.

A strong Board of Directors has been selected which reflects not only nationwide distribution, but broad interdisciplinary expertise. Many of the directors are leaders in the fields of geriatrics, gerontology, and related disciplines who have been drawn together by recognition of the need for a unified effort to support basic biomedical and critical clinical research in these areas.

During the past year, a number of distinguished lay leaders have joined, but there is need for the enlistment of additional leaders in the public sector, especially Midwest, Far West, Texas, and Florida. Nominations of outstanding candidates, with supporting data, should be forwarded to the National Office.

COMMITTEES BEGIN OPERATIONS

A number of committees have been established to carry out the mission of AFAR. The Committees on Research, Membership, and Affiliations have begun their work. Other committees are in formation.

Membership

Among those who work in gerontology, geriatrics, and related fields, there has been tremendous interest in what AFAR is doing. Board Member Lawrence L. Feigenbaum, M.D., Medical Training Director, Geriatric Services, Mount Zion Hospital and Medical Center, San Francisco, has accepted the Chairmanship of the Membership Committee. Membership in the AFAR Public and Scientific Councils is unlimited. Council members may be involved in developing geographic affiliates as well as in making personal contributions for the advancement of AFAR. Persons interested in membership are invited to contact the National Office.

Research

The Committee on Research, headed by Board Member, John P. Blais, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Dementia Research Services, Burke Rehabilitation Center, is in the process of formulating guidelines for the distribution of funds for the support of biomedical research and the development of a scientific program for the next annual meeting, to be held in Philadelphia, April 17, 1982. (See Page 1).

Affiliations

A geographic type of affiliation is also planned, and already inquiries have been received from interested groups in Ohio, California, Washington, Virginia, Missouri, Louisiana, Kansas, Wisconsin, New York, and Massachusetts. A committee on Affiliation, headed by Board Member, Roy L. Donnerberg, M.D., Co-Director, Office of Geriatrics and Gerontology, Ohio State University, is developing an appropriate formula for geographic affiliation, following the excellent pattern of similar national organizations.

ASSOCIATIONS AFFILIATE WITH AFAR

AFAR is a federation with the objective of developing and coordinating a major national effort for biomedical problems that relate to aging and its associated disabilities. Affiliation of all groups who are interested in supporting this effort is a primary concern. At present, several categories of affiliation are operative and under negotiation.

The National Retired Teachers Association/American Association for Retired Persons (NRTA/ARP) and the American Geriatric Society have signified their support of AFAR, and both are represented on the Board of Directors. Several other organizations with interests in this field are now in the early stages of negotiations.

Any organization whose objectives are compatible with those of AFAR may apply for an affiliation relationship. Address inquiries to the President.

AFAR's GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING A GEOGRAPHIC AFFILIATE

- Identify those physicians and scientists in your community who are interested in the problems of gerontology and geriatrics at every level from basic science to high quality medical care.
- Invite these people to an informal meeting. Do not be discouraged if the numbers are few at first. (In the 1930's, the American Heart Association national meetings often drew only 30-50 people).
- Draw up plans for future larger meetings.
- Enlist some of the leading public figures as members of your group.
- Develop a public position so that your organization will attract wider support.
- Obtain information regarding your state's legal statutes pertaining to nonprofit organizations, incorporate as a tax-deductible charitable organization in your state, obtain IRS approval.
- Keep in touch with the national AFAR office for advice.
- Encourage attendance at annual meetings of AFAR.
- Start fund-raising efforts as early as possible.
- Follow AFAR national guidelines for: ... Fund raising distribution ... Use of funds locally for research and operation ... Contribution to the National Office of AFAR for operation, preparation of educational material, meetings, and above all, research.

The experience of the American Heart Association and other voluntary organizations has demonstrated that a strong central administration is essential to a successful national effort. Therefore, it is necessary that all affiliates contribute to the central administrative effort and that the National Office, in turn, supply information and educational material for local use and develop national meetings and forums for the exchange of scientific information.
FUNDS CONTRIBUTED FOR RESEARCH

It is clear that in order to support new and innovative research, funds must be obtained. Without basic and critical clinical research there will be no substantial improvement in the care of the elderly beyond the present levels, which are far from adequate. There are countless individuals and foundations, including many family foundations in this country, who have available funds but do not have assurance that their gifts will be used for the maximum benefit of their fellow citizens. Experience has demonstrated that explaining the urgency of the objectives of AFAR will often bring a surprising and generous response. One should not feel hesitant about bringing AFAR to the attention of others. Many people are aware of the ever-increasing problems of the health of the elderly but do not realize that they can do something positive about it.

Major contributions for 1981 have been received from the following foundations: The Bedminster Fund, Pareto Fund, Glenn Foundation for Medical Research, Roland and Gladys Harriman Foundation, NRTA-AARP, Milton and Lillian Pollak Foundation, the Silverman Foundation. Additional funds have been received from individuals and other sources.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF SELECTED

Mr. E. Richard Heldeman has been named Executive Director of AFAR and Mrs. Ellen Orbach has been named Executive Assistant. Mr. Heldeman comes to AFAR from Hunter College where he served as a senior administrator, most recently as Executive Director of College Relations, Development and Publications. Mrs. Orbach was formerly with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University and Fordham University's Development Office.

NEWS ITEMS WELCOME

This is the first issue of The President's Letter, the official newsletter of the American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR). Comments and contributions from AFAR members and other interested colleagues are welcomed and should be addressed to the Editor, Mr. E. Richard Heldeman. As activities develop and research grants are awarded they will be reported in future newsletters.

Irving S. Wright, M.D., President
American Federation for Aging Research
450 East 69th Street
New York, New York 10021