Epilepsy Foundation Awards Research Grant in the Amount of $50,000 to Explore Prevention of Sudden Unexpected Death from Epilepsy (SUDEP)

Iowa City, Iowa 2/8/2016 - The Epilepsy Foundation announced the award of their “Targeted Research Initiative for Morbidity and Mortality” grant for $50,000 to Dr. Gordon Buchanan MD, PhD, of the University of Iowa. The funds will aid in the research and development of methods to prevent SUDEP (Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy).

SUDEP is the leading cause of death in patients with refractory epilepsy. No other cause of death is found when an autopsy is done. Each year, more than 1 out of 1,000 people with epilepsy die from SUDEP and if seizures are uncontrolled the risk of SUDEP increases to more than 1 out of 150. These sudden deaths are rare in children, but are the leading cause of death in young adults with uncontrolled seizures.

The University of Iowa grant will explore strategies designed to help medical professionals gain a better understanding of ways to prevent SUDEP. Key factors will be explored to help provide more insight on the impact of breathing during a seizure with the goal to stop respiratory arrest.

Dr. Buchanan: “With SUDEP being the leading cause of death in patients with refractory epilepsy, SUDEP is an important public health problem. Many of my own patients have heard about SUDEP and are afraid that it could happen to them. Thus it is important to learn more about SUDEP to identify ways to prevent it. As a scientific community we have learned that SUDEP often occurs due to a seizure causing breathing to stop. However, we know fairly little about how seizures cause breathing to stop. Consequently we do not have good measures to prevent this. Support provided from this grant will allow our group to explore a role for a novel mechanism is seizure-induced respiratory arrest and hopefully lead to identification of a novel preventive strategy for SUDEP.”

Roxanne Cogil, Director of Iowa Epilepsy Services, Epilepsy Foundation of North Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska: “There are certain populations of people with epilepsy who are at higher risk for SUDEP and since there is no known cure for epilepsy, the research is extremely important to help figure out the mechanisms of SUDEP in order to learn how to prevent it and save lives.”

The award presentation will be held on Wednesday, February 10th at 12:15 PM located at University of Iowa Department of Neurology, Damasio Conference Room on 7 South in Carver Pavilion, 200 Hawkins Drive, Iowa City, Iowa. Please rsvp to Roxanne Cogil at r cogil@epilepsyiowa.org or at 515-238-7660.

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About Epilepsy
When a person has two or more unprovoked seizures, they are considered to have epilepsy. Epilepsy affects nearly 3 million people in the U.S. and 65 million worldwide. This year, another 150,000 people will be diagnosed with epilepsy.
About the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska
The Epilepsy Foundation has Iowa offices in Iowa City and Des Moines which serves all 99 counties in the state of Iowa. Services include facilitating epilepsy empowerment groups across the state; providing free customized training on seizure recognition, first aid and safety; and conducting an annual statewide epilepsy conference. The Epilepsy Foundation works one-on-one with families to direct them to resources to help improve their quality of life, as well as to minimize the social stigma and misunderstanding that excludes persons with epilepsy from employment and community activities. The Iowa program also provides advocacy to help remove the barriers to treatment options and access care. More information can be found at www.epilepsyiowa.org.

About Epilepsy Foundation
The Epilepsy Foundation, a national non-profit with nearly 50 local organizations throughout the United States, has led the fight against seizures since 1968. The Foundation is an unwavering ally for individuals and families impacted by epilepsy and seizures. The mission of the Epilepsy Foundation is to stop seizures and sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP), find a cure, and overcome the challenges created by epilepsy through efforts including education, advocacy, and research to accelerate ideas into therapies. The Foundation works to ensure that people with seizures have the opportunity to live their lives to their fullest potential. For additional information, please visit www.epilepsy.com.