

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALS Therapy Development Institute Delivers Impassioned Testimony to Congressional Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs

Physician/Scientist Describes a New Challenge Faced by Troops Coming Home from War

CAMBRIDGE, Mass – April 28, 2009 – Dr. Stanley Appel testified before the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee on behalf of ALS patients, and in support of the ALS Therapy Development Institute (ALS TDI), last Thursday. Dr. Appel urged congress to support a comprehensive approach to ALS therapeutic development, such as the one at ALS TDI.

Dr. Appel spoke on the still unknown reasons for the connection between service in the armed forces and a greater propensity for developing the disease. He advised Subcommittee members to remember that, while there is excellent work being done to determine factors involved in the military correlation, without a comprehensive and well funded program to build therapeutics, there would be no opportunity to treat fallen heroes.

“I am here before this subcommittee - responsible for supporting our veterans - because [ALS] continues to take an inordinate toll on our nation’s veterans,” said Dr. Appel in his prepared testimony before the subcommittee. Dr. Appel, co-director of the Methodist Neurological Institute, has been a physician/scientist for more than 40 years and is a Board Member of ALS TDI, as well as the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

As he began his testimony, Dr. Appel acknowledged the leadership of Congressman Michael Capuano, along with Congressmen Patrick Kennedy, Henry Brown and John Spratt in addressing the need to bring effective therapeutics to market for ALS patients.

In discussing the VA’s now closed ALS Registry, Dr. Appel honored its’ list of servicemen; “While most of those heroes have passed away, the numbers imply that at least one out of fifteen ALS patients has a history of military service. This is quite staggering. These veterans, and all the patients I treat, are facing a horrifying illness; a battle with no armor,” continued Dr. Appel. “We have the responsibility to arm our service members in the final battle they are currently only to lose. The thousands, who have recently returned from engagement, and those soon to come home, may in fact encounter a final new enemy in ALS.”

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects approximately 30,000 people living in the United States at any given time. According to Dr. Appel’s testimony, more than 2,000 veterans registered as suffering from ALS when the Department of Veterans Affairs initiated its voluntary ALS Registry in 2003.

The subcommittee, chaired by Congressman Chet Edwards, known as a national champion for America's veterans, troops, and their families, is responsible for the appropriation of funds for a variety of military related accounts, including all funds administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under Edwards' leadership, the subcommittee has increased appropriations for veteran's benefits and health care by \$16.3 billion since 2007.

"ALS is not an incurable disease. It is an underfunded disease. The science is ready, the technology is ready, we clinicians are ready." Dr. Stanley Appel's complete testimony before the subcommittee is available online at www.als.net.

About ALS TDI

The mission of the ALS Therapy Development Institute (ALS TDI) is to develop effective therapeutics that stop ALS as soon as possible. Focused on meeting this urgent unmet medical need, ALS TDI executes a robust discovery program, as well as a multi-pronged approach to validate potential therapeutics; including small molecules, protein biologics, gene therapies and cell-based constructs. The Institute's unique, industrial-scale platform allows for the development and testing of dozens of potential therapeutics each year. Built by and for patients, the Institute is the world's only non-profit biotechnology company with more than 30 professional scientists. In addition, the Cambridge, Massachusetts based research Institute collaborates with leaders in both academia and industry. For more information, please visit us online at www.als.net.

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