Introduction to The Aging Brain, Part 1
Joseph H. Friedman, MD

On November 9, 2011, a CME course was held in Providence on the Aging Brain. The papers in this and another issue to follow contain summaries of the talks given. All physicians, excepting pediatricians deal with elderly patients, and are doing so at increasing rates. In addition, of course, we are all aging ourselves. As Houston Merritt, MD, one of the great neurologists of the twentieth century, and ex-Dean of my medical school, commented to a group of medical students many years ago, “When it’s very quiet, I can sometimes hear the splash of the cortical neurons falling into one of my cerebral lacunes.” Unfortunately hearing doesn’t do well with aging either, but we won’t go into that here.

The study of clinical aging is challenging because it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish “normal” from pathological aging. One of the articles focuses on the “normal” changes seen by a pathologist in the non-disease brain. Our esteemed founding dean, Dr. Stanley Aronson, almost 90 years old, takes on the topic of successful aging, in addition to continuing his weekly columns in the Pro Jo, now exceeding 1000. We discuss the clearly pathological, seizures, stroke, depression, gait disorders, and included one on the contentious topic of normal pressure hydrocephalus. Dementia, undoubtedly the worst problem of the aged, gets the most attention with articles about testing, imaging, behavior and nosology. Driving and caregiving, “para-medical” problems, which probably are more important than almost all other issues to the patient and family, are addressed as well.

I hope these articles are as well received in print as the lectures were in life.

Joseph H. Friedman, MD, is Director of the Movement Disorders Program at Butler Hospital, and Professor in the Department of Neurology at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. Dr. Friedman is also the Editor-in-Chief of Medicine & Health, Rhode Island.

Disclosure of Financial Interests
Lectures: Teva, Ingelheim Boehringer; General Electric Consulting: United Biosource; Bubaloo, Halsted, Reitman LLC; EMD Serono; Genzyme; Teva; Acadia; Addex Pharm; Schwarz Pharma Research: MJFox; NIH: Cephalon; EMD Serono; Teva; Acadia
Royalties: Demos Press

Correspondence
e-mail: joseph_friedman@brown.edu