

Elaine Schlosser Lewis Fund Celebrates 15 Years of Support for ADHD Research and Researchers

■ Hanna Smith
AACAP Development Manager

1994: What was happening in the United States just 15 years ago? The average movie ticket cost \$4, Former President Bill Clinton gave his first State of the Union Address calling for healthcare reform, and, at AACAP, the Elaine Schlosser Lewis (ESL) Fund was established to support and encourage advanced research on the neurobehavioral developmental disorder Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

In the intervening years, movie tickets have doubled or tripled in price, the healthcare debate has reignited, and the ESL Fund has made a significant impact on advancing the understanding and treatment of attention disorders through its *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (JAACAP)* research award and pilot research awards...and the growth of the ESL Fund's endowment far surpassed the inflation in the price of a movie ticket!

The idea for the ESL Fund was conceived when Susan Mendik and her late husband, Bernard Mendik, asked **Owen Lewis, M.D.**, how they could support ADHD research. The Mendiks had watched their child struggling with ADHD and wanted to know what they could do to help other children. Dr. Lewis approached AACAP and Council approved establishing the Fund, named in honor of Dr. Lewis's mother, who as a special education teacher advocated for children facing behavioral challenges to learning long before ADHD was a defined disorder.

The ESL Fund provides financial support to child and adolescent psychiatrists for initial research. Also it recognizes the achievements of leaders in the field of ADHD research and treatment. What began with an initial donation of \$5,000 has attracted many more

supporters and increased to a fund of nearly a half million dollars. While the support and number of awards have grown, the ADHD directed mission of the ESL Fund remains unchanged.

In 1994, the ESL Fund presented its first award, *The Elaine Schlosser Lewis Award for Research on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder* to Dennis Cantwell, M.D., for identifying the contribution of genetic factors to the development of ADHD. A generous private benefactor endowed this award ensuring that the ESL Fund annually recognizes the lead author of the outstanding scientific paper, on ADHD, published in the *JAACAP*. Recognizing this contribution, the awardee is invited to present his/her work at AACAP's Annual Meeting. This recognition ensures that important findings in the field are acknowledged; and encourages researchers to explore the etiology and treatment of ADHD.

Peter Jensen, M.D., received the *JAACAP Award* in 2000 for his July 1999 article "*Are Stimulants Over-prescribed? Treatment of ADHD in Four U.S. Communities.*" Dr. Jensen was the principal investigator of the NIMH sponsored multi-modal, multi-site treatment study on attention disorders. Dr. Jensen and colleagues' research indicated that children with ADHD were often not treated pharmacologically and suggested the need for improved education of physicians, mental health experts, and parents about the effectiveness of these therapies.

Lily Hechtman, M.D., the 2005 awardee, was also part of this first two-site, multi-modal treatment study for children with ADHD. Her team's findings, reported in her article, "*Academic Achievement and Emotional Status of Children with ADHD Treated with Long-Term*



Jeanie Tse, M.D., the 2005 Pilot Research Award recipient and Lily Hechtman, M.D., the 2005 Journal Award recipient at the 2005 ESL Fund Update Luncheon

Methylphenidate and Multimodal Psychosocial Treatment," led to the large seven-site, multimodal treatment study funded by the NIMH (Multimodal Treatment Study of Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder [MTA]). This work earned Dr. Hechtman and her team members the CHADD Hall of Fame Award in recognition of "Outstanding Professional Achievement in Medicine, Education, and Research on Attention Disorders."

In 2001, through of the generosity of supporters, the ESL Fund expanded to offer the *ESL Pilot Research Award in Attention Disorders*. The award supports the initial ADHD directed research efforts of child and adolescent psychiatry residents or junior faculty, the first step in attracting larger grants. In 2001 the award was a two-year grant of \$9,000, which was endowed three years later thanks to many generous contributions. In 2005 the ESL Fund expanded to offer a second pilot research award and added the *ESL Pilot Research Award for Learning Disabilities* which broadened the focus to include learning disabilities. This year marked the first increase of monetary support for the *Pilot Research Award* to \$15,000. The next goal is to endow the *Pilot Research Award for Learning Disabilities* as well.

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One of the first *Pilot Research Award* recipients (2001) was **Stephanie Hamarman, M.D.**, a faculty member of the Neuroscience Teaching Faculty at New York Medical College in New York City. Dr. Hamarman has continued the pharmacogenomics research that she began with the initial ESL funding. Her studies focus on how the genetic make-up of persons with ADHD influences treatment response to stimulant medication. The *ESL Pilot Research Award* started her ongoing research career.

Gholson Lyon, M.D., the 2007 recipient, started to study the effects of stimulant medication on children and adolescents with Tourette Syndrome and ADHD. The preliminary results indicate that there are very few, if any, acute exacerbations of tics when these children or adolescents are given stimulant medications. These findings helped scientifically refute the practice of withholding medication based on prior, and mainly anecdotal, evidence of tic exacerbation with stimulant medications. He is now pursuing this study further with a grant funded by the Tourette Syndrome Association. Dr. Lyon says, "The Elaine Schlosser Lewis award provided me with my first independent grant, which helped me to launch my career devoted to the study

of childhood-onset neuropsychiatric disorders. For this, I am very grateful."

AACAP is proud of the advancements and research it has funded and of the careers the ESL Fund has launched. It is important to recognize that this success is due to the devoted donors who continue to give and support the ESL Fund year after year. Many are parents, grateful for the difference that advances in child and adolescent psychiatry have brought to their children's lives. These donors, affectionately called *Special Friends of Children*, are the visible leaders and backbone of support for the ESL Fund. Thanks to the continued support of donors such as Susan Mendik, Claire Edersheim, Joe Sangimino, Marcy Syms, and many others, the ESL Fund continues to flourish. In 2005, AACAP recognized founding donor, Susan Mendik, for her contributions and leadership by awarding her the AACAP Catchers in the Rye Humanitarian Award.

The ESL Fund could never have achieved success without the leadership and commitment of Owen Lewis. Dr. Lewis continually seeks new ways for the ESL Fund to help children with attention disorders reach their potential through scientific research.

The ESL Fund honors the achievements of the award recipients at the ESL Fund Annual Update Luncheon. This year the 10th Annual ESL Fund Luncheon on Monday, December 7, 2009, will feature a brief address from **James McGough, M.D.**, the 2009 Elaine Schlosser Lewis Award recipient for his paper on "*Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) Pediatric Bipolar Disorder Profile and ADHD: Comorbidity and Quantitative Trait Loci Analysis.*" After Dr. McGough's address, he will participate in a panel with former ESL Special Research Awardee **Jeffrey Newcorn, M.D.**, and **Harold Kopelwicz, M.D.**, founding director of the NYU Child Study Center; moderated by Dr. Lewis. The panel of experts will discuss genetics, areas of breakthroughs, environment, and treatments of attention disorder research over the past 15 years.

The ESL Fund receives no contributions from corporations or pharmaceutical companies (with the exception of two gifts in 2001 and 2002 from Oppenheimer's Miracle Day Awards) but relies solely on the altruism of the *Special Friends of Children* and other generous donors. For more information on ways to support the ESL Fund or how to become a *Special Friend of Children*, please call AACAP's Development Department at 202.966.7300, ext. 130. ■



Stephanie Hamarman, M.D., the 2001 *Pilot Research Award* recipient and Marcy Syms, a *Special Friends of Children* supporter at the 2005 ESL Fund Update Luncheon



Todd Levine, M.D., the 2006 *Pilot Research Award* recipient (the first for a *Learning Disabilities* project), Margaret Weiss, M.D., the 2006 *Journal Award* recipient, Owen Lewis, M.D., founder of the ESL Fund, and Bennett Leventhal, M.D., at the 2006 ESL Fund Update Luncheon