

OBITUARY

The American Epilepsy Society, editors of *Epilepsy Currents*, and entire epilepsy community have been stunned by the sudden death of Susan S. Spencer, MD, Professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery at Yale School of Medicine, on Thursday, May 21, 2009, in Salt Lake City, Utah, from complications of an acute illness.

Dr. Spencer, along with Dr. Robert Macdonald, was one of the founding editors of *Epilepsy Currents*, the journal of the American Epilepsy Society. The unique format of this publication, with critical commentaries and reviews on important current literature written by epilepsy experts, was an integral part of her vision for this journal. The success of *Epilepsy Currents* owes much to the considerable time and effort Susan dedicated as Chief Editor of Clinical Science during the formative first 8 years from 2001 to 2009. Interestingly, of the current four senior editors of *Epilepsy Currents*, three of us have had contact with Susan from early in her career. One (MAR) was a medical and graduate student at Yale when Susan was a neurology resident, another (GKB) was an internal medical resident while she was a neurology resident, and a third (JAF) did her epilepsy fellowship training at Yale after Susan had joined the faculty there. Therefore, we share a long-term personal connection with Susan, which deepened over the years as we all worked together.

Dr. Spencer's contributions and influence in the field of epilepsy were extensive and far-reaching—she was particularly recognized for her work in epilepsy surgery and epileptic networks. As codirector of the Yale Epilepsy Program (with her husband Dennis Spencer, MD, Chair of Neurosurgery), she helped to make Yale one of the foremost programs for epilepsy surgery in the world, during a time when long-term monitoring and seizure surgery were much less established than now.

Born in Budapest, Hungary in 1948, Susan grew up in Yonkers, New York and came to Yale as a neurology resident, following undergraduate and medical training at the University



Susan S. Spencer, MD, 1948–2009

of Rochester. She joined the Yale faculty in 1980 and spent her entire academic career there. She was nationally and internationally known for her clinical and research activities. Dr. Spencer published over 200 articles and was the recipient of a number of NIH grants (individual and program) throughout her career. Her many accomplishments were recognized when the American Epilepsy Society awarded her the Clinical Investigator Award in 2003—the most prestigious honor paid to a clinical researcher. She was a renowned teacher, yet she also cared for a large number of patients, some local and regional, others traveling thousands of miles for her opinion.

Her involvement in the American Epilepsy Society was unparalleled. She served on numerous committees and the Board of Directors and was elected President of the AES in 2000. In addition, she held important leadership positions in the American Academy of Neurology and American Neurological Association.

We at *Epilepsy Currents* and the American Epilepsy Society mourn the premature loss of a true leader who excelled in the arenas of clinical practice, teaching, and research. The American Epilepsy Society has established the Susan Spencer Fund for Clinical Research and Education; contributions may be made online or sent to the American Epilepsy Society. Susan was a friend, a colleague, and a model for us all; we extend our deepest sympathies to her family.

Gregory K. Bergey, MD

Michael A. Rogawski, MD, PhD

Jacqueline A. French, MD

Carl E. Stafstrom, MD, PhD