

## **Clinical Study of Mal de Debarquement Syndrome (MdDS) Will Be Supported by the National Institutes of Health**

Yoon-Hee Cha, MD, has been awarded a 3 year grant by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct clinical studies on Mal de Debarquement Syndrome (MdDS), a rare disease that manifests with perceptions of motion. Beginning on January 1, 2010, Dr. Cha will receive funding from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), a NIH institute that supports research on disorders of balance. The award to Dr. Cha (*Functional Neuroimaging and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation in Mal de Debarquement*) represents the inaugural use of federal research dollars to research the cause and potential treatment of MdDS.

Dr. Cha is a physician-scientist in the Department of Neurology at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) where she provides routine clinical care and undertakes clinical and translational science investigations. Based on her prior MdDS research efforts, Dr. Cha was a recipient of the *Early Career Distinguished Investigator Award* from the MdDS Balance Disorder Foundation in 2008. More recently, she was inducted into the *Researcher Hall of Fame* by the National Organization of Rare Diseases (NORD). In her impending NIH-funded research studies, Dr. Cha will collaborate with other specialists in brain function, neuroplasticity, vestibular rehabilitation, and neuroimaging to examine possible etiologies as well as improved diagnostic tests and treatments for MdDS.

MdDS is a rare, but often debilitating disorder that affects women more often than men and typically presents with imbalance, fatigue, cognitive impairment, and sensations of rocking, swaying and bobbing. The wide spectrum of MdDS symptoms usually develops after a cruise, plane flight, or other passive motion event and may persist for months to years. Although sensations of movement or phantom motion perception imply an altered integration of sensory input in the brain, little is known regarding the basis for or treatment of this often-misdiagnosed syndrome. Dr. Cha's on-going research studies and her impending NIH grant to expand these efforts provide worldwide hope for those affected by this disorder.

The MdDS Balance Disorder Foundation is dedicated to promoting MdDS awareness and research and will continue to facilitate Dr. Cha's clinical research efforts. The Foundation is an international, all-volunteer non-profit organization that operates as a PA 501(c)(3) corporation in support of MdDS education and biomedical investigations.