



## Looking Forward

### *UVA Draws on Decades of Leadership in the Continuing Fight against Epilepsy*

Outward manifestations of epileptic seizures can vary widely, but in the brain, PET scans reveal what can only be described as an electromagnetic storm. With each storm, a moment is lost and precious memories are washed away.

Epilepsy affects more than three million Americans, yet each experience of the disease, and each moment lost in seizure, is unique.

In children, seizures can hinder learning and social development, while adults with epilepsy experience restrictions on driving and independence. People with epilepsy may voluntarily restrict their social interactions to avoid having a seizure in a public setting. Often, the cause of the disease remains a mystery, creating even further frustration.

#### **A Beacon of Hope**

The University of Virginia's F. E. Dreifuss Comprehensive Epilepsy Program provides initial and ongoing consultations, state-of-the-art diagnostics, and cutting-edge treatments to help patients achieve remission of their seizures. Each year, the program touches the lives of over 3,500 individuals coping with epilepsy. This number does not include the untold numbers helped by our decades of research, or the countless friends and family who take comfort in knowing their loved ones are being treated with respect, compassion, and world-renowned expertise at UVA.

Seizure control with drug therapy requires a careful balance between eliminating seizures and managing side effects. UVA has participated in the clinical trials of virtually every seizure medication on the market today, and our excellent epilepsy surgery program offers hope to those patients whose seizures cannot be controlled with medication alone.

With our robust epilepsy research enterprise, UVA has long been at the forefront of discovering the fundamental mechanisms that underlie seizures. Nationally and internationally recognized investigators work on animal models to define new drug targets, develop new methods of treatment, and identify potential interventions that could prevent the development of epilepsy.



Nathan Fountain, M.D., leads a multidisciplinary team of epilepsy specialists at UVA.

#### **Our Most Pressing Need**

There is a great national need for highly skilled physicians and researchers in the field of epilepsy, and UVA is well-positioned to help meet this need. In offering patients the full complement of care, we also create an ideal learning environment. Trainees at UVA learn from leaders in the field, and work on multidisciplinary teams that include nurses, social workers, nutritionists, and educational counselors. Their experiences include ample opportunities to participate in, and generate new ideas for, the cutting edge epilepsy research that happens every day at UVA.

Philanthropy will play an important role in creating new and greater educational opportunities within UVA's epilepsy program. Fellowship support allows us to attract the best and brightest, and helps fund their research and specialized education. These epilepsy fellows will be trained to provide comprehensive care to patients today while searching for the cures of tomorrow.

To learn more about how you can help UVA meet the needs of people with epilepsy and their families in Virginia and beyond, please contact Cindy Reynolds in the Health System Development Office at (434) 243-8432 or (800) 297-0102, or through e-mail at [creynolds@virginia.edu](mailto:creynolds@virginia.edu).