Mark Levin, Jeff the 'Brain Surgeon' and the Big Lie

In today's digital world, information travels far and wide (often repeating itself many times over), even if that information is totally false. As such, we are once again bringing up the Mark Levin topic because the audio file from this radio program is continuing to circulate on the Internet. In fact, we now are seeing increased traffic about this phone call, likely due to the recently concluded November presidential election. All that said, here is an overview of the events that happened nearly a year ago, from the perspective of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons' (AANS')/Congress of Neurological Surgeons' (CNS') Washington Office.

Last November, an individual claiming to be a "brain surgeon" named Jeff called into the Mark Levin Show and declared that while he was attending a neurosurgical meeting in Washington, D.C. (we believe he was referencing the October 2012 CNS Annual Meeting), he learned that the Obama administration was planning to restrict the availability of advanced neurosurgical care for individuals over the age of 70. The caller claimed that a document was circulated at this meeting stating that individuals over 70 who come to an emergency room and who are on government-supported health care will only get "comfort care."

Immediately after this program aired, the AANS and CNS thoroughly investigated the claims made by this individual and found them to be totally false. In addition, we were able to ascertain that Jeff is NOT a neurosurgeon. The Washington Office published several statements condemning the false assertions and, ultimately, issued a national press release. This was picked-up by numerous media and other fact-checking outlets, which ran stories verifying that the assertions made by Jeff were, in fact, false. In addition to our public statements, the AANS and CNS requested numerous times that Mark Levin remove this podcast from his website, as it portrayed inaccurate information that could potentially be harmful to patients. Alas, our demands went unheeded, and because the program failed to remove the podcast, this false rumor went viral, and it is now too late to put this toothpaste back in the tube.

No one said it better than Rick Ungar from Forbes when he wrote on this topic: "As a media organization – and you know who you are – how do you willingly spread such a story when you have every tool at your fingertips necessary to debunk such an outrageous claim?" We may never know the answer to this question since the Mark Levin camp has stood by the claims made on the program. But as we said in our release, one thing is absolutely certain: "Neurosurgeons are committed to providing timely, compassionate, and state-of-the-art treatment for all patients – regardless of age – who have neurosurgical conditions."

America's neurosurgeons encourage everyone to share our press release with your friends, family, patients, colleagues and others in your community and assure them that there is no truth to this big lie.
in this very notion that the idea for Neurosurgery Blog was born. The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) believe it's imperative to always give an honest take on key health-policy decisions whether it's good, bad or just plain ugly – even if, in some cases, it makes us unpopular or ruffles a few feathers.

The mission of Neurosurgery Blog is not only to investigate how health-care policy affects health-care practice and to illustrate that the art and science of neurosurgery encompasses much more than brain surgery, but to get people talking about health care in an open and honest way. On Sept. 10, 2012, Neurosurgery Blog officially went live. We have since blogged on topics such as the sustainable growth rate (SGR), the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), medical-liability reform and health reform in general.

Additionally, the AANS/CNS Washington Office has begun using social media platforms to expand the reach of its message. We invite you to visit the blog and subscribe to it, as well as connect with us on our various social media platforms, so that you can keep your pulse on the many health-policy activities happening in our nation's capital.

- Neurosurgery Blog: More Than Just Brain Surgery
- Neurosurgery's Twitter Feed: @Neurosurgery
- Neurosurgery's Facebook Page
- Neurosurgery's LinkedIn Group

NEUROSURGERY IN THE NEWS

- **New Issue of AANS Neurosurgeon, Focused on Neurovascular Neurosurgery, Goes Live November 28**

The latest issue of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons' (AANS') online quarterly publication, *AANS Neurosurgeon*, will go live on Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2012. This edition is themed around the topic of neurovascular neurosurgery and will include several interesting features exploring this topic. The lead feature in the November issue will be "Neurovascular Disease and the Neurosurgeon," by Robert H. Rosenwasser, MD, FAANS, FACS. This edition also will showcase an exciting international feature, "Vascular Microneurosurgery in a Changing World: Views from the Northern Edge of Europe," by Juha Hernesniemi, MD, PhD; Aki Laakso, MD; and Mika Niemela, MD, PhD. Meanwhile, "The Ethics of Treating Aneurysms at Low-volume Centers Without Endovascular Support," offers an interesting Ethics in Practice discussion by Benjamin Davis Fox, MD; and Adam S. Arthur, MD, MPH, FAANS, FACS. Robert F. Keating, MD, FAANS, also presents an informative piece for this issue's Financial Forethought department, "Financial Planning for the Young (And Not-So-Young) Neurosurgeon."

The publication's new "Neuros in the News" section highlights practitioners on the move and those acknowledged for achievement or merit, as well as success in practice. Check the publication's website daily, as Newsline features 24/7 updates on research, trends, findings and more. For those active in social media, get news updates and other informative articles by following us on Twitter. An electronic table of contents also will be distributed on Nov. 28, 2012, so keep your eyes open for the upcoming issue of *AANS Neurosurgeon*. Online. Anytime. By and for neurosurgeons.

- **AMA Presents Mark J. Kubala, MD, FAANS(L), with 2012 Distinguished Service Award**

On Nov. 12, 2012, the American Medical Association (AMA) presented Mark J. Kubala, MD, FAANS (L), with its 2012 Distinguished Service Award during one of the organization's policymaking meetings. A neurosurgeon who has served as a practicing physician for more than half a century, Dr. Kubala has been an active voice for neurosurgery among his peers and within various organizations.

"This is so wonderful," said American Association of Neurological Surgeons President Mitchel S.
Berger, MD, FAANS, FACS. "Mark is so deserving. We are proud to have him as one of our own."

Presently working for a private practice of neurological surgery at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Beaumont, Texas, where he previously served as the chairman of the neurosurgery section and chief of surgery, Dr. Kubala has held several leadership roles with the Texas Medical Association (TMA); is one of the founders of the TMA Foundation; and since 1994, has been a delegate or alternate delegate to the AMA House of Delegates, where he also served as chair of the neurological section.

"It is an honor to present Dr. Kubala with this award for outstanding commitment to his community and the practice of medicine," said AMA Board Chair Steven J. Stack, MD. "His long-standing commitment to the practice of medicine – and to patients – is an inspiration to his fellow physicians."

- **NeuroPoint Alliance, N2QOD, Cited as Way To Improve Outcomes for Neurosurgical Patients**

  A recent article in Becker's Spine Review offers a synopsis of a November 2012 Journal of Neurosurgery Neurosurgical Focus article that discusses five strategies that could improve outcomes for patients undergoing neurosurgical procedures – including the use of NeuroPoint Alliance and National Neurosurgery Quality and Outcomes Database (N²QOD) as a national registry to help neurosurgeons with benchmarking, statistical analysis, and quality-improvement initiatives.

  The researchers looked at numerous factors that contributed to adverse neurosurgical events. Based on those results, the researchers listed five possibilities that health-care providers could prevent these adverse events from occurring in the future.

- **NEWS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

  - **Donate to the NREF Today**

    As a member of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), you are invited to aid the Neurosurgery Research and Education Foundation (NREF) in its mission of "Advancing Neurosurgery through Research." Your contribution to the NREF is an investment in neurosurgical research, training and education. Your donation will enable the Foundation to continue to support vital neurosurgical research projects in areas such as aneurysms, brain tumors, hydrocephalus, head/spine trauma, pediatrics, spinal-cord injury and stem-cell research.

    For 30 years, the NREF has successfully funded progressive scientific studies thanks to financial commitments from individuals, groups, academic/hospital practices and corporations. Your continued support, coupled with new commitments from the Sections and through the Cushing Circle of Giving, will allow the NREF to fulfill its goal of providing a private, non-governmental source of funding for neurosurgical research. Please consider renewing or making a first-time contribution in support of research that, by funding research grants today, will promote advances in neurosurgery in the future. Visit the website to make your donation.

  - **National Neurosurgery Quality and Outcomes Database (N2QOD) Reaches 2,000 Patients**

    The National Neurosurgery Quality and Outcomes Database (N²QOD) is a prospective clinical registry designed to address the need for high-quality patient outcomes data related to care of patients with neurosurgical disorders. N²QOD is a project of NeuroPoint Alliance (NPA), established in 2008 by the AANS, with the support of major U.S. neurosurgical organizations and societies.

    The registry began accepting patient data from pilot sites in February of 2012, and by November 2012
has entered data from more than 2,000 patients. Currently there are 28 contracted sites, and a total of 37 sites have achieved complete institutional review of the project. NPA is activating new sites regularly. It is estimated that the sites which are either already participating or are in various stages of activating the N²QOD will generate more than one million independent variables a year. The infrastructure of the N²QOD has been designed to greatly expand the number of participating sites over time.

At present, the lumbar spine module is available, with a cervical spine module being offered by spring 2013. Modules for cerebrovascular and tumor are in development.

Participation in N²QOD enables practices (or hospitals) to:

- Establish risk-adjusted national benchmarks for both the cost and quality of common neurosurgical procedures.
- Analyze their individual morbidity and clinical outcomes in real time.
- Generate both quality and efficiency of neurosurgical procedures.
- Demonstrate the comparative effectiveness of neurosurgical procedures.

For more information, visit NeuroPoint Alliance at [www.neuropoint.org](http://www.neuropoint.org).

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### 2013 Medical Student Summer Research Fellowship Application Now Available

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Neurosurgery Research and Education Foundation (NREF) are now accepting applications for the 2013 AANS Medical Student Summer Research Fellowship (MSSRF) program.

Twenty fellowships, each in the amount of $2,500, will be awarded to medical students in the U.S. or Canada who have completed one or two years of medical school. Students will spend a summer working in a neurosurgical laboratory mentored by neurosurgical investigator who is a member of the AANS. We hope that you will share this exciting opportunity with young medical students, potentially interested in a career in neurosurgery. For more details, visit the [website](http://www.neuropoint.org).

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### X-Plain Patient Education Software Available to Members

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), through a new agreement with the Patient Education Institute, offers AANS members discounted access to award-winning interactive patient education software. The X-Plain Neurological Surgery Patient Education System is a computer-based system that simplifies how information is conveyed to patients.

The software is fully narrated, uses simple text, graphics and animations on every page, and asks patients questions to ensure full comprehension of the material being presented. The software supports a large library of topics including anterior cervical discectomy, AVMs, craniotomy, deep brain stimulation, lumbar laminectomy, posterior cervical fusion, spinal cord injury, and trigeminal neuralgia, to name a few. X-Plain is written by medical experts, based on current practice guidelines and evidence-based medicine, and is regularly reviewed by practicing physicians.

For more information about this software, and to take advantage of the AANS member discount, please call the Patient Education Institute at (866) 452-6203. Be sure to identify yourself as an AANS member.

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**NEW ON THE MARKETPLACE**

- **CPT 2013: Professional Edition**
Stay in compliance with the code changes for 2013 and increase the accuracy of your claims submission with the American Medical Association's official coding resource for procedural codes, rules and guidelines. Many new features have been added for 2013. American Association of Neurological Surgeons members receive 30 percent off the list price.

Purchases can be made by calling the AANS Member Services Department at (888) 566-AANS (2267) x539 or by visiting the AANS Marketplace.

ICD-9-CM 2013 Volumes 1 and 2

Be prepared for the most recent ICD-9-CM code changes with this comprehensive resource. Combining the Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting (OGCR) listed with the codes for instant reference in a format designed for coding excellence, this codebook helps you easily access the information you need to stay up-to-date and ensure the most accurate billing for the physician practice. American Association of Neurological Surgeons members receive a 20 percent discount off the American Medical Association’s list price.

Purchases can be made by calling the AANS Member Services Department at (888) 566-AANS (2267) x539 or by visiting the AANS Marketplace.

Vertebra Bones Necktie - Red Version Now Available

This classic red necktie with gold pattern of vertebra bones brings a sophisticated feel to any medical professional's wardrobe. The neckties are manufactured using a unique nanotechnology treatment that attaches to the individual fibers, essentially wrapping each fiber in a protective layer, rendering it water-repellant, stain-resistant and, most importantly, antimicrobial, aiding in the prevention of healthcare associated infections. The tie is proven resistant to the following microbes: MRSA, VRE, Salmonella, E. Coli, C. difficile and now H1N1 (Swine Flu). The superhydrophobic qualities also render the ties resistant to wrinkles and odors.

Purchases can be made by calling the AANS Member Services Department at (888) 566-AANS (2267) x539 or by visiting the AANS Marketplace.

MEETING NEWS

2012 AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery Annual Meeting

November 27-30, 2012
St. Louis Union Station Hotel, A DoubleTree by Hilton
St. Louis

Time is Running Out!
Don't miss your opportunity to attend the AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery Annual Meeting. Register now to join your colleagues in St. Louis, and keep abreast of the latest in pediatric neurosurgery research and key issues affecting the industry.

The St. Louis Union Station Hotel is still accepting reservations at the group rate of $149. Don't delay any longer – make your hotel reservation now.

Preliminary Program Now Available on Pediatric Section Website
The program for the 2012 AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery Annual Meeting Annual Meeting is looking to be the best ever. Visit www.pedsneurosurgery.org/meeting.asp to check out this year's Preliminary Program and see what's new at the meeting. Meeting registration and hotel reservation forms are included in the program packet for an alternative to the online registration method.

We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis!

81st AANS Annual Scientific Meeting

April 27-May 1, 2013
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans

General meeting registration for the 2013 AANS Annual Scientific Meeting is now open for AANS members. General meeting registration and housing reservations open to non-members on Nov. 19, 2012.

Priority general registration is now open for the 81st AANS Annual Scientific Meeting, so make your travel arrangements and housing reservations via the online registration process. AANS members are provided exclusive priority access two weeks prior to other registrants for their first choice of hotels, popular courses and specially organized AANS tours. As a benefit of AANS membership, you could save up to $200 on Annual Scientific Meeting registration fees. For more information about registration and the 81st AANS Annual Scientific Meeting, please click here.

2013 AANS/CNS Section on Pain Biennial Meeting

April 26, 2013
New Orleans Marriott
New Orleans

The 2013 AANS/CNS Section on Pain Biennial Meeting Preliminary Program is now available on the AANS/CNS Section on Pain website. This one-day scientific program will focus on facial pain. Educational sessions are directed toward neurological surgeons, residents, nurse clinicians and physician assistants involved in pain management, and will be directly applicable to their practices.

Registration for the meeting is now open. To register and/or secure housing accommodations, please click here.

AANS/CNS Section on Tumors 10th Biennial Satellite Tumor Symposium

April 26-27, 2013
Hilton New Orleans
New Orleans

The AANS/CNS Section on Tumors invites you to attend the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors 10th Biennial Satellite Tumor Symposium. The meeting will begin on Friday, April 26, 2013, with an educational program in the latest research designed to improve the care of patients with brain tumors. The scientific program committee encourages you to submit an abstract for possible selection and presentation of your research at the meeting.
Abstract Center Is Now Open
To submit an abstract, you will need your MyAANS login (e-mail on file with AANS) and password to access/edit your abstract during the submission period. If you have forgotten your login information, please e-mail abstracts@aans.org. Abstracts will be submitted via the MyAANS.org portal.

Please note that this submission site works best by using the Firefox browser. A free download is available at http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/.

To submit an abstract, follow these eight steps:

- Visit https://myaans.oaans.org/MyAANS.aspx and login.
- Select Abstract Corner from the left-hand side navigation bar and then select the meeting for which you want to submit an abstract.
- Enter Title & Abstract Body (MUST include required sections with the following headings: Introduction, Methods, Results and Conclusion).
- List Authors, including all relevant medical degrees (individual entering abstract will automatically and permanently be listed as the primary author).
- Choose your presentation Preference (Oral, Electronic or Either).
- Provide responses to Additional Information, previous presentation, sponsor (required) and FDA approval.
- Complete Disclosure and agree to Terms and Conditions.
- Review Work and Submit.

The abstract submission deadline is Friday, Jan. 4, 2013. Visit the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors website at http://www.tumorsection.org/ for additional details on the scientific program, social events, registration and housing.

AANS COURSES

- Prepare for the MOC Cognitive Exam with AANS Neurosurgical Update

2013 AANS Neurosurgical Update: Interactive Review by Case Management
February 16-17, 2013
Hyatt Regency Coral Gables
Coral Gables, Fla.

Formerly known as Weekend Update, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) Neurosurgical Update has a fast-paced format that allows attendees to study new clinical information through more than 100 cases in just one weekend. Join Course Director Thomas J. Leipzig, MD, FAANS, and a well-respected faculty for our next interactive neurosurgical review, which will help you to prepare for the MOC Cognitive Exam and assess your knowledge of current neurosurgical practice.

An individualized report of your responses is included in registration. This report will compare your responses with your colleagues and support your preparation for the MOC Cognitive Exam. In addition, Participants can claim 18.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ in a single weekend.

Click here for more course information and to register, or call (888) 566-2267.

- New 2013 Exit Strategies Course for Chief Residents

American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) President-elect William Couldwell, MD, PhD, FAANS, will be hosting a new special resident education course created for chief neurosurgical residents. “Exit Strategies” is designed to provide the tools needed for the successful transition from
Finding a job in neurosurgery: hospital employment vs. small group practice vs. large group practice vs. academic practice?

What is the future of health care? How do I get up to speed on medical practice issues such as loss prevention, malpractice and reimbursement?

Certification/MOC/MOL – Process and pitfalls.

Information on this course will be made available later this year. The first course will be offered April 5-6, 2013, in Chicago. As with all AANS Resident Courses, residents must be nominated by their Program Directors to participate. Watch http://www.aans.org/ for information as it becomes available.

AANS/SNS Neurosurgical Online Sessions for Residents

Please visit the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) iTunes U site to view free educational videos provided by the AANS/SNS Neurosurgical Online Content Committee. The site features various subspecialty topics, plus videos from the Resident Boot camp series. You can reach this site by going to the iTunes store and entering "AANS" in the search field. Click on "see all" at the center/top of the screen, and you will be able to see "All iTunes U for AANS" products.

If you already have iTunes, you can use the following link to take you directly to the site: http://itunes.apple.com/us/institution/aans-american-association/id408873302. The videos can be found under "Featured Selections" in the blue "AANS and SNS Neurosurgical Online Sessions" folder.

Please visit often, as new videos are continually added.

AANS Operative Grand Rounds

New Videos Now Available

AANS Operative Grand Rounds provides an informative, educational forum of operative procedures, with an emphasis on increasing surgical safety, minimizing surgical complications and improving patient outcomes. Experts in the field offer thorough knowledge of cutting-edge surgical techniques, and evidence-based data serves as a reliable source of updated information on a variety of neurosurgical procedures.

New videos include the following:

Pterional Craniotomy: Details of Technique
Led by Troy D. Payner, MD, FAANS

Hospital Employment or Private Practice: Part One – Hospital Employment and Contract Negotiation
Led by James R. Bean, MD, FAANS; and Richard N. Wohns, MD, FAANS

Hospital Employment or Private Practice: Part Two – Private Practice and Contract Negotiation
Led by James R. Bean, MD, FAANS; and Richard N. Wohns, MD, FAANS

The videos may be viewed on mobile devices and tablets, including iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad and Android.
Registration Now Open for the 2013 Managing Coding and Reimbursement Courses

Directed by Joseph S. Cheng, MD, MS, FAANS; and co-directed by John K. Ratliff, MD, FACS, FAANS, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) presents coding courses for the entire reimbursement team. We will provide the tools you’ll need to help ensure you are compensated appropriately and fairly for your work when scheduling surgery and billing for services.

There are numerous changes in 2013, including neurointerventional codes, angiography codes, new spine technology codes and changes to CPT language for neurostimulator programming codes.

In addition, neurosurgeons need to be prepared to make significant changes in their dictation in preparation for the implementation of the ICD-10 codes. We will begin to discuss those changes along with other ways you can prepare your practice.

February 8-9 – Las Vegas, Nevada
March 22-23 – San Antonio, Texas
July 26-27 - Baltimore, Maryland
September 6-7 – Chicago, Illinois
November 15-16 – Coral Gables, Florida

For additional information or to register, click here or call (888) 566-AANS (2267).

Do You Need CME? AANS Members Can Take Advantage of Free CME Offerings

Check out the American Association of Neurological Surgeons’ (AANS’) CME offerings to ensure your CME compliance. Visit the AANS website for more online courses.

Combining Radiosurgery with Open Surgery in the Setting of Spinal Cord Compression
Faculty: Jason Weaver, MD, FAANS
0.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™

Cerebral Metastatic Disease
Faculty: Jonas M. Sheehan, MD, FAANS, FACS
0.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™

Neurosurgical Focus
1.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™
New issue every month! The past 36 issues are still available.

The Clinical Ethics in Neurosurgery: Part 1
Faculty: AANS Ethics Committee
1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™

Anterior Cervical Diskectomy and Fusion (ACDF): Current Grafting Options
Faculty: Neill M. Wright, MD, FAANS
1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™

AANS Operative Grand Rounds: Surgery for Anterior Skull Base Meningioma: Pearls and Pitfalls
Faculty: Aaron Cohen-Gadol, MD, FAANS
1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™

C1 Lateral Mass Screw Placement
Register Now for the 2013 Goodman Oral Board Preparation Courses

Directed by Allan D. Levi, MD, PhD, FACS, FAANS, the Goodman Oral Board Preparation course is highly interactive, with more than 200 case scenarios presented. Providing a broad review of pertinent topics in clinical neurosurgery, this course will help you prepare to take your oral board certification exam. The sessions are intense, comprehensive and enjoyable, with no lectures. Experienced neurosurgeons will critique your patient management responses and your ability to organize those responses.

Register early as registration space is limited! This premier oral board preparation course sells out months in advance.

May 12-14, 2013
Westin Oaks Hotel
Houston, Texas

November 10-12, 2013
Westin Oaks Hotel
Houston, Texas

For additional information or to register, click here or call (888) 566-AANS (2267).