



## New Board Member Educates on Need for Financial and Estate Planning for People with Chronic Brain Disease

Just as neurologists can't use a one-size-fits-all approach to their patients, financial planners and lawyers advising people with chronic brain diseases should be tailoring their recommendations to the type of challenges the individual can be expected to face.

Yet when estate and tax planning attorney Martin M. Shenkman's wife, Patti Klein, an anesthesiologist, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2006, Shenkman found few resources to help them plan for the future. He and his wife made it their goal to address that problem.

Shenkman, who joined the American Brain Foundation Board of Directors in January, has written scores of articles and four books on the issues surrounding financial and estate planning for people with chronic illness and disability, including books for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. When air travel became too difficult for Patti, the couple purchased an RV and took their mission on the road. Shenkman has made more than 70 presentations around the country on the topic for professional organizations for financial planners, CPAs, and lawyers, charities, and others.

"The recruitment of Martin Shenkman to our board is part of our drive to bring influential, talented non-neurologists



*Martin M. Shenkman,  
CPA, MBA, PFS, AEP, JD*

into the leadership of the Foundation," said Jane Ransom, executive director of the American Brain Foundation. "This is essential as we begin appealing to the American public to join the fight against brain disease."

Shenkman talks about his motivation for working with the American Brain Foundation:

### **What moved you to join the American Brain Foundation Board of Directors?**

My wife was diagnosed 10 years ago with MS and we saw and subscribed to *Neurology Now*. I found the articles excellent (more informative and more intelligent than most consumer publications on these topics) and I contacted *Neurology Now* and offered to write for them and did a series of articles. When I learned of the American Brain Foundation and its relationship with the AAN, it was a natural to jump in. About five years ago my wife and I started a personal charitable mission to educate professional advisers (attorneys, CPAs, financial planners) on how to better plan for clients living with chronic illness. We intentionally broadened our mission beyond MS so that it would have more relevance to people we reach and help more people. So the idea of a charity that has a similar mission to address all of

the injuries and diseases of the brain was a natural fit. Also, it is my layman's impression that funding research for all brain disease may identify issues, treatments, and hopefully cures that single-disease funding organizations might miss. Finally, the ABF's ability to tap the intellectual capital of the AAN sets it apart from any charity I've ever worked with. For the lawyers, CPAs, and financial planners I lecture to and write for, the ABF is a simple, one-stop charitable solution for many of the clients who are looking for charitable giving opportunities.

### **What experiences and viewpoints do you bring to this role?**

I'm a caregiver for a spouse with MS, I am an attorney/estate planner who regularly guides clients on planned gifts (donations), and I have a personal charitable effort that has similar missions. I'm also a CPA and financial planner.

### **What do you hope to accomplish as a member of the American Brain Foundation Board of Directors?**

I think the potential of what the AAN and American Brain Foundation can do together, if properly capitalized on, is incredible. The stellar reputation and intellectual capital of the AAN coupled with a consumer-facing charity with a broad mission seems unique. •