**Nerve Stimulation Restores Partial Consciousness**

**Using a new experimental treatment, neurosurgeons in France have enabled a patient who had been in a vegetative state for more than 15 years to smile, cry, and show other signs of consciousness. The 35-year-old man had been in "unresponsiveness wakefulness" -- periodically opening his eyes but never "awake" or responding to his surroundings -- since suffering brain damage in a car accident in 2001, reports NewScientist.com. A team from the French National Center for Scientific Research wrapped electrodes around the patient's vagus nerve, which extends from the brain stem to the abdomen. When they then stimulated this nerve with tiny electrical currents, the patient experienced increased brain activity. After just one month of treatment, he opened his eyes more often, tracked people moving around his room, and responded to requests to turn his head. He even shed tears on hearing his favorite song. While the severity of his brain damage makes it very unlikely he'll ever regain the ability to talk or walk, the nerve stimulation appears to have taken him out of a vegetative state. Study leader Angela Sirigu says more research is needed into the treatment, which is already used for some forms of epilepsy and depression. But she says the findings show that "brain repair (is) still possible even when hope seems to have vanished." *(The Week magazine, October 13, 2017)***