

Delaying Epilepsy Drugs May Be OK for Some Immediate Treatment May Not Be Needed After First Epilepsy Seizure

Starting epilepsy drugs right away may not be necessary for people who have experienced a first seizure or who are in the early stages of epilepsy. Researchers found that immediate treatment with epilepsy drugs did not reduce the risk of repeat seizures over the long term in a large group of people followed for five years.

"At two years, the benefits of improved seizure control with immediate treatment seem to be balanced by the unwanted effects of drug treatment and there is no improvement in measures of quality of life," report researchers.

Researchers say the decision of when to begin treatment for someone who has suffered a first seizure or has infrequent seizures is a difficult one and these results should help doctors and patients make informed choices. Epilepsy drugs have side effects, and a first-time seizure does not always mean that the person will develop lifelong epilepsy.

The study compared the effects of immediate treatment with epilepsy drugs vs. delayed treatment in a group of more than 1,400 people who had had one seizure or were in the early stages of epilepsy with infrequent seizures. Half of the participants received immediate treatment with epilepsy drugs, primarily Tegretol and valproate, and the other half did not receive epilepsy drugs until they and their doctor agreed that treatment was necessary.

The study showed that immediate treatment with epilepsy drugs did reduce the number of seizures in the first two years of treatment, but not without side effects, including fatigue, drowsiness, and nausea.

But the study also showed that virtually the same number of patients who were treated immediately with epilepsy drugs and those who delayed treatment were seizure-free for three to five years after the start of the study (76% of the immediately treated patients vs. 77% of those who delayed treatment).

There was also no difference in the quality of life reported by both treatment groups. In an editorial that accompanies the study, Samuel Berkovic of the University of Melbourne, Australia, says the findings should help doctors and patients make better decisions about when to start epilepsy treatment.

Apart from a decreased risk of seizures in the short term, the results of this study show there is little to gain in the long term from starting medication immediately.

— THE LANCET

Adult Epilepsy Support Group

Meets Second Tuesday of Month at 6:30 PM
2919 W. 2nd Street, Wichita (more info: 943-2453)

AUG 9: EPILEPSY MEDICATIONS
SEPT 13: THE REST OF THE FAMILY
OCT 11: DIET AND SEIZURES

Youth Need Epilepsy Education Study Shows Teens think epilepsy impact worse than HIV

Many teenagers think that having epilepsy has a much greater physical and social impact than other chronic conditions, according to new research.

Presenting a study to the recent Canadian Congress of Neurological Sciences in Ottawa, Christina Cheung, a medical student at Queen's University in Kingston, revealed that **13 % of the 13 to 18 year olds surveyed said they would be reluctant to befriend someone with epilepsy, mainly as they did not know what to do during a seizure.**

The study investigated what the teenagers thought was the impact of epilepsy, Down's syndrome, leukemia and HIV. Apart from Down's syndrome, the teenagers felt that epilepsy had the worst impact of the conditions. It was also thought that epilepsy had the greatest negative impact on personality out of the conditions.

The researchers said the results show education about epilepsy is needed, with a particular focus on the fact that people with epilepsy are normal, and what to do during a seizure.



—EPILEPSY ACTION

School Alert Program

Teaching children seizure first-aid and to accept others



"Seizure Smart" School Alert is a free educational presentation program that seeks to educate both students and school staff about epilepsy. Chances are, there are several students in your school right now who have seizures. Would your school's staff and students know how to help those children if they were to have a seizure at school?

Epilepsy Resource Connection can help your school to become "Seizure Smart." Participants in a free School Alert presentation will learn how to recognize different types of seizures, how to respond to someone having a seizure, how to provide any necessary first aid, the importance of giving emotional support to individuals affected by epilepsy, and how to help others understand.



Using puppets for those in grades pre-K through third, the program educates youth about epilepsy, stigma, and diversity. Videos & presentations are available for older students and staff.

The program is free to all Sedgwick County area schools. Call ERC at 316-943-2453 for more information or to schedule a free presentation.



Lamictal May Affect Contraception

Changes to the prescribing information for the anti-epileptic drug Lamictal (lamotrigine) have been circulated to health care professionals in the UK by its manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

GSK reports that new research shows an interaction between lamotrigine and oral contraceptives which may result in the reduced effectiveness of the contraceptives.

There also may be reduced seizure control in women on lamotrigine who start taking an oral contraceptive. In addition, if women taking lamotrigine stop taking oral contraceptives, there is a risk of the level of lamotrigine in the body becoming too high, which may cause unwanted symptoms. GSK added that lamotrigine levels may be decreased during pregnancy and quickly revert after birth.

You should not make any changes to anti-epileptic treatment until seeking advice from a physician. Reducing or abruptly stopping anti-epileptic treatment can cause recurrent or an increasing number of seizures. Until women have sought advice from their doctor they should consider using an additional form of contraception, such as the barrier method, to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.

If you are concerned about anti-epileptic drugs and pregnancy, you should consult a physician.

— EPILEPSY ACTION

Cooling Microchip May Stop Partial Seizures

The development of a microchip that detects seizure activity and then cools the brain to stop the seizure spreading has been reported in the *New Scientist*.

In partial seizures, the electrical activity is concentrated in one part of the brain and it was already known that cooling brain cells can reduce their activity and make them appear harmless. Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine (St. Louis), have developed a small chip, placed in the skull, that detects the start of the seizure and cools down the cells involved. The aim to develop a system where the chip will cool brain cells without the person with epilepsy knowing what has occurred.

The study cooled brain cells from body temperature (around 98.6°F) down to around 72°F which stopped the seizures from spreading with no apparent harm to brain cells.

The researchers hope this may be a solution for people with epilepsy for whom anti-epileptic medication or conventional brain surgery has not worked. They now plan to do more research, both in order to confirm the findings of this study and to seek technical solutions to build an implantable cooling device.

— EPILEPSY ACTION

Parent's epilepsy SUPPORT GROUP

Glimmer Group

**School & Seizures:
Coping In the Classroom**
Saturday, Sept. 3, 2005
10:00 am — Noon @ ERC
2919 W. Second St., Wichita

Glimmer Group is a support group for parents of children with seizure disorders. Meetings are held quarterly. Join us for a useful discussion of the complexities of having seizures in the classroom.

*** Teachers & School Nurses are encouraged to attend.***

- Learn ways to elevate the seizure stigma your child experiences,
- See how your child can effectively discuss seizures with peers,
- Get special forms to use with your child's teacher or school nurse to ensure this school year is a safe one for your child,
- Learn about Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) usage in the classroom (Kari Livermore, VNS Therapeutic Consultant, will be on hand to answer your VNS questions.)

Courtesy of Cyberonics, attendees are invited to stay and enjoy a light lunch following the presentations.



Please **RSVP @ 943-2453** to attend.

Cyberonics & ERC present a free Patient Education Program

Treatment Options if Drugs Don't Work For Your Seizures

6:30 — 8:00 p.m.

September 14, 2005

Club House Inn & Suites

515 S. Webb Road • Wichita, KS
(Kellogg & Webb Road)

- The ARC of Sedgwick County
2919 W. 2nd St
Wichita, KS 67203

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Web: www.arc-sedgwickcounty.org/erc



presents...

share hope!

a free epilepsy awareness concert

David M. Bailey in concert

an award winning, best-selling folk singer, & prophet with a guitar



Friday, November 11, 2005 7:00 p.m.

Westside Christian Church, 1819 W. Douglas, Wichita



More information: 316-943-2453