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hotline

U K Epilepsy Survey Highlights Unfair Prejudice At Work

Despite being as efficient and qualified as colleagues without seizures, stigma persists

Around a third of people in the United Kingdom (UK) with epilepsy have experienced prejudice from their employer and nearly half are reluctant to change jobs because they fear encountering prejudice elsewhere, according to a survey carried out by the National Society for Epilepsy (NSE).

The level of prejudice perceived to be shown by employers has changed little, the NSE says, since it last carried out a similar survey three years ago.

The survey was carried out with SHL, a producer of psychometric tests for employers, who assessed a cross-section of people with epilepsy including some people with active epilepsy and people who had undergone surgery to bring their seizures under control.

The group of people with epilepsy undertook online psychometric tests which were evaluated and compared with a similar group of people who did not have the condition.

There was no marked difference between the two groups, meaning people with epilepsy are just as likely to perform as well their colleagues when handling numerical and verbal information. However, latest evidence based on the research suggests employers are wrong to take such a narrow-minded view.

Margaret Thomas, assistant director of communications at the NSE, said:

“Needless to say, we weren’t surprised at this finding, but we know many people with epilepsy have experienced prejudice in the workplace, with bosses assuming that people with epilepsy are less able in the workplace than those without the condition.

“We were keen to take up the challenge with SHL to prove the point that people with epilepsy are just as able as any other equally qualified person to undertake almost any employment. There are now very few exceptions in which as person with epilepsy may not be suitable for a particular job – and this is based on safety grounds rather than ability.” —EPILEPSY ACTION

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Lack of knowledge about epilepsy and the disorder’s perceived impact in the workplace produce unnecessary fear and anxiety among some employers.

Workers with epilepsy face negative and uninformed attitudes, outright (and illegal) discrimination, fear of repercussions after disclosing and under-utilization of their skills. Employers worry about productivity, absenteeism, liability, job performance, reaction of customers or co-workers, accommodation costs and workplace safety.

In the U.S., over 25% of working age adults with epilepsy are unemployed. Of those unemployed, 64% feel they are unemployed as a direct result of their epilepsy.

Overall, there is no difference in job performance or productivity between workers with epilepsy and other workers. In fact, studies have shown that the work performance, cooperative behavior, productivity and stability of employ-

ees with epilepsy is equal to or greater than that of employees without epilepsy. And absenteeism rates are lower too because workers with epilepsy practice good self-care and strive to avoid illness.

Accident rates for employees with epilepsy are lower than those for non-seizure employees. Some studies have even revealed that employees with epilepsy work more attentively and productively than others, as they often try harder to prove themselves at work.

—WEB MD

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Anti-Epileptic Drug Therapy Usage Linked to Lower Socio-Economic Status

A study published in the journal *Epilepsia* shows a higher unemployment rate and a lower health-related quality of life amongst people who had epilepsy as a child.

Strikingly, in self reports, the health-related quality of life was not determined by good or bad psychosocial function or having, or not having, seizures, but rather by whether or not they were taking long-term anti-epileptic drug therapy.

Researchers from the University of Turku, in Finland revisited a group of 99 adults, originally from a group of 245 childhood epilepsy patients. 67 % were in remission and no longer taking medication while 14 % were still taking anti-epileptic drugs (AED).

The study found that the people still taking AEDs had a higher rate of unemployment and lower socio-economic status, whilst those no longer taking AEDs had similar levels of unemployment and status to the general population. Both groups, however, had lower rates of marriage and less children than the general population. The researchers noted that the differences in employment and socio-economic status are not attributable to differences in educational levels.

—EPILEPSY ACTION

Quality Survey

We distributed a quality survey with the May 2005 ERC Hotline. Have you returned your survey?

* Please let us know if you need another survey. *

943-2453 or erc@arc-sedgwickcounty.org

More Info: 943-2453

Please Register by August 1, 2005.



EPILEPSY RESOURCE CONNECTION'S

FAMILY CAMP DAY 2005

For Persons & Families Affected by Seizure Disorders

Join in the fun and build relationships with others!!

Swimming

Horseback Riding

Games & Crafts

Networking

B-B-Q

Sponsored in part by



Wichita Southeast Optimist Club

Sunday, August 7, 2005

12:30—5:30 PM

Camp Hiawatha

1605 W. 51st Street North, Wichita

☞ from Meridian Ave. turn east on 51st N.; follow 51st St. 1/8 mile; camp is on the south side of the road

Ⓜ NOTE: We can provide directions to those coming from outside Wichita: 943-2453



Epileptologist
Dr. Kore Liow
will be on site to
answer your questions

B-B-Q Dinner @ 5:00 PM
(provided)

ERC Family Camp Day Registration Form Δ Please Return by August 1st

Registration Fee

- Individual \$2.00
- Family \$5.00

Do NOT send cash.
Please enclose check payable to: ERC

Return by August 1, 2005 to:

ERC Family Camp Day
2919 W. 2nd Street
Wichita, KS 67203-5319

Name(s) and age of children attending:

Name _____

Address _____

City & Zip _____

Phone _____

email _____

* Please list any special accommodations you will need (e.g., dietary restrictions) on back.