

Epilepsy Surgery in Young Children Showing Great Potential

Early surgery may have marked impact on cognitive & social abilities

Some epilepsy researchers and physicians have long-wondered if epilepsy surgery is being considered too late in the treatment process. A recent study hints that it might be, as an examination of 50 preschool children who had epilepsy surgery revealed that surgical treatment prevented further seizure damage and let kids resume mental and social development.

Researchers, writing in the journal *Epilepsia*, studied how children aged between three and seven years old developed intellectually in the few years following epilepsy surgery. While those with severe epilepsy are at high risk for significant developmental delay, data showed that those who became seizure free after surgery were able to develop better and may actually gain some abilities that they did not have before surgery.

4 out of 5 kids in the study resumed mental and social development, and nearly three-fourths of the kids continued to improve. This occurred even in children who had mental retardation prior to surgery. One out of five gained at least 15 IQ points after surgery. Twelve months after surgery, 82 % of children showed stable improvements in development and three children showed gains of greater than 15 points in IQ. Gains in IQ were only observed in seizure-free children.

One of the report's authors, Dr Ingrid Tuxhorn, commented: "The questions answered in our study have a significant everyday value for counseling parents whether their child should undergo epilepsy surgery.

"This study on the long-term cognitive outcome of preschool children who had epilepsy surgery shows that children with a shorter duration of epilepsy and a seizure-free outcome have the best chance for improving their cognitive function two to three years after a successful operation."

"[There appears to be] a window of vulnerability for irreversible decline of cognitive potential," Tuxhorn said. "Early surgical control of seizures may therefore have a marked impact on the developmental potential of children with early onset, severe epilepsy."

This is very reassuring news for parents that epilepsy surgery can help their children catch up with their peers.

"When you have uncontrollable seizures, with every additional drug there is a chance of being seizure-free," said Gregory L. Barkley, M.D., chair of the Epilepsy Foundation's professional advisory board.

"That's a good reason to try drugs you haven't tried before. But after a reasonable trial of a few drugs, it is time to think seriously about surgery. And in kids it is even more urgent, because if you do it today rather than wait two or three years, you keep your child from falling farther behind." —Epilepsy Foundation

ERC Presents Honors

Dr. Kore Liow, Michael Webb receive ERC's 2005 awards

During The Arc of Sedgwick County's Evening of Awards on Thursday, May 4th, ERC recognized those that have gone above and beyond this year for those in the epilepsy community.



Matthew Fullerton, left, presents Dr. Liow with the Community Connection Award.

Dr. Kore Liow, Medical Director of The Via Christi Comprehensive Epilepsy Center, was presented with an ERC Community-Connection Award. "Dr. Liow has established Wichita as a nationally recognized epilepsy treatment and research center. He has championed his patients and the entire community affected by seizures in advocating for quality of life issues and access to care," said ERC Coordinator, Matthew Fullerton.

Dr. Liow has presented at ERC's United Way of the Plains funding hearings, and has agreed to speak at this year's Family Camp Day. His staff have also been very helpful in presenting at ERC in-service events.

Michael Webb was recognized as ERC's Volunteer of the Year. Michael has continued to answer the call when needed and does an outstanding job representing the organization and the community. Unfortunately, Michael was unable to attend to receive his award.

Volunteers Needed

ERC's **Family Camp Day** will be held
Sunday, August 7, 2005.

We need volunteers to help plan Family
Camp Day. If you'd like to help please call
943-2453.

Epilepsy Foundation of Kansas & Western Missouri's **Camp Shing**

June 10 — 12
Tall Oaks Conference Center
Linwood, KS

For more information call Judith:
(816) 444-2800, x 27

Antiepileptic Drugs Under Investigation by FDA for Possible Drug-Suicide Links

Drug companies that produce antiepileptic medications have been asked by the Food and Drug Administration to re-examine their clinical study data after claims of increased risk of severe depression, suicide or suicidal thoughts were levied against the drug Neurontin.

This inquiry comes as the FDA is working to rebuild its damaged reputation stemming from two cases of drug mishandlings last year, involving the antidepressant Paxil and painkiller Vioxx. The latter was linked to cardiovascular problems, while Paxil, in addition to other widely-prescribed antidepressants, was linked to increased suicide risks.

The FDA says it is doing the review because, as it learned with antidepressants, links between medications and adverse events can be missed "if you don't look properly," Robert Temple of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research said.

Gregory L. Barkley, M.D., chair of the Epilepsy Foundation's professional advisory board, said he would not be surprised if the review shows high rates of suicidal behavior in patients taking anticonvulsant drugs compared to the general population because these drugs are often given to people who have suicidal thoughts.

"People with epilepsy have about twice the rate of depression as the general population and depression is a risk factor for suicide," he said. "In addition, suicide rates are increased among bipolar patients, many of whom may take anticonvulsant drugs as mood stabilizers."

"There is no evidence so far that one anticonvulsant is any worse than others, so patients on anticonvulsant drugs should not get alarmed," he continued.

The FDA requested the review last month and has given the pharmaceutical companies six months to respond. —Epilepsy Foundation

Adult Epilepsy Support Group

Meets Second Tuesday of Month at 6:30 PM

2919 W. 2nd Street, Wichita (more info: 943-2453)

MAY 10: Stress Management

JUNE 7: Stress Management (Unit II)

JULY 12: Group Choice TBA

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Research Suggests Yoga Beneficial For People With Epilepsy



Regular yoga sessions can bring on a "significant reduction" in the anxiety levels of people with epilepsy, according to a new study.

Researchers at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) in Chennai, India are undertaking a three year study of a group of

people with epilepsy who are having daily yoga sessions

The group of 31 people were given yoga training and now perform yoga daily whilst keeping records about their medication and seizure frequency. The data is being compared to a group of 25 people with epilepsy who are not doing yoga.

The results achieved so far are very positive and encouraging. While almost all persons in the experimental group report better self-confidence and control over their health, some have consistently demonstrated the ability to even abort seizures by specific breathing practices. —Epilepsy Action

*Editor's Note: This information is **not** provided as medical advice. You should consult with a physician before undertaking any treatment regimen.*

UN Reports Shortage of Epilepsy Drugs in Iraq



Iraqi doctors have reported a shortage of medication for children with epilepsy because of the high cost of purchasing the drugs needed to treat the condition, according to a United Nations agency working in the country.

According to government statistics, there are around 4,500 children with epilepsy in Iraq. Citing problems with the economy from war and years of sanctions, the price of medication is too high for most Iraqis and most pharmacies don't even stock such expensive drugs because of the low demand. Reportedly four children have died because they have not received vital medication.



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