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From The Director

Memory disturbance can often be traced to a problem in some other area of cognitive function. Persons may report a failure in their memory but in actuality, the information was never encoded in the first place due to problems with attention or information processing speed. It is important to recognize that problems with attention often occur in a failure to absorb information and one cannot be expected to recall something that was never learned.

For patients with epilepsy, however, even if they do successfully encode information, they may still have difficulty remembering it later on due to difficulties with storage and retrieval. As discussed above, the retrieval problems that patients with epilepsy experience are not surprising as epilepsy frequently has a direct effect on brain structures that are involved in memory processing.

Patients with epilepsy who suspect that they have a problem with their memory or other cognitive functions should discuss these concerns with their physician. The physician will then be able to consider the relative effects of neurological factors specific to the patient’s particular type of epilepsy as well as the potential of any treatment effects that may be contributing to the patient’s symptoms. A referral to a neuropsychologist for evaluation of memory and other cognitive functions is often useful in assessing the degree and nature of the disturbance. The evaluation involves administration of standardized measures that provide objective results regarding the patient's memory performance in comparison to other individuals of the same age (and sometimes educational background). The neuropsychologist then evaluates the results from the entire battery to determine the nature and extent of the memory or cognitive disturbance. The cause of the memory disturbance may be suggested and treatment recommendations are also provided.

There are two major classes of treatment for memory disturbance. The first involves medication management. To date, there are no established guidelines for pharmacological treatment of memory in epilepsy, but some epilepsy centers are beginning to prescribe medications used in the treatment of early Alzheimer’s disease in the hopes that patients with epilepsy might benefit from them. The second approach is more akin to behavioral management. That is, utilizing behavior modification strategies to enhance memory by improving organization and structure in one’s daily life. For example, using a seven day pill box organizer to manage medications or making sure to always leave one’s keys on the same hook by the door so they do not get misplaced. Another example of this is to use “prosthetic” devices such as notebooks, alarms, calendars, and electronic organization devices (i.e., PDAs). These simple solutions may seem obvious but their results can be quite significant. Cognitive rehabilitation may also be used to help patients to develop methods for encoding and retrieving information.

KAREN ISAACS LEBEAU, PH.D.

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Support Groups for Adult Patients with Epilepsy & Their Caregivers

The 2nd Wednesday of every month - 6:30 PM • Wallkill Medical Arts Building, 390 Crystal Run Rd., Suite 101, Middletown, NY 10941

The 1st Thursday of every month - 6:30 PM • White Plains Hospital Center Medical Library, Davis Avenue at East Post Road, White Plains, NY 10601

The 2nd Thursday of every month - 6:30 PM • Overlook Hospital, The Atlantic Neuroscience Institute Conference Room, 99 Beauvoir Ave., Summit, NJ 07901

The 2nd Wednesday of every month - 3:00 – 4:00 PM • Medical Pavilion, 4256-1 Bronx Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10466

The 4th Monday of every month - 10:30 – 11:30 AM • Richmond University Medical Center Conference Room, 355 Bard Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10310

THEIR CARETAKERS

Support Groups for Adult Patients with Epilepsy & Their Caregivers

The 1st Thursday of every month - 6:30 PM • Wallkill Medical Arts Building, 390 Crystal Run Rd., Suite 101, Middletown, NY 10941

Parent Group

The 4th Tuesday of every month - 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM • Wallkill Medical Arts Building, 390 Crystal Run Rd., Suite 101, Middletown, NY 10941

TEEN Support Group

The 4th Tuesday of every month - 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM • Wallkill Medical Arts Building, 390 Crystal Run Rd., Suite 101, Middletown, NY 10941

TEEN Support Group

The 1st Tuesday of every month - 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM • 21 Old Main Street, Suite 101, Fishkill, NY 12524

Call Ann Marie at 845-695-8685 for more information or to register.

Please check our website for upcoming educational events.

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