

DO SLEEP DEPRIVATION AND STRESS BRING ON SEIZURES? – YES

Prof Manjari Tripathi, India

An unexpected event such as a seizure which disrupts the ongoing activity of a person has from time immemorial been thought to be brought on by something. Some of these are myths but some of these so true that clinicians often use these to increase the yield of pickup of discharges in the EEG lab or seizures in the EMU.

Emotional stress is a common triggering factor identified, in our own study 31.5%, had this finding. Given clinical experience and the results of several studies that have revealed that there is a strong association between stressful life events and seizures this factor cannot be ignored. Stress management is an important tool for empowering patients for better seizure control, because a study of progressive relaxation training showed that patients in treatment arm had 29% reduction in seizure compared with only 3% reduction in control group.

Sleep deprivation was the third common triggering factor reported in our study, and its prevalence rate was 19.75%, which was congruent with the findings of others where 18-37 % of the patients reported sleep deprivation as a triggering factor. In our study a positive association was found between sleep deprivation and emotional stress. Fatigue was the fourth common triggering factor reported by majority of the patient's i.e.15.30% adults association was found between these two triggering factors. The mechanisms by which these bring on seizures will be discussed.

The ethology of seizures may be whatever but if we could help our patients identify what could bring it on without raising a paranoia reducing these could go a long way for better seizure control and improving quality of life in our persons with epilepsy.

References

Balamurugan E, Aggarwal M, Lamba A, Dang N, Tripathi M. Perceived trigger factors of seizures in persons with epilepsy. *Seizure*. 2013 Nov;22(9):743-7