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hotline

Study Suggests Atkins Diet "May Be Beneficial" For People With Epilepsy

The first comprehensive review of possible dietary treatments of epilepsy has recently been published in the journal Epilepsy Currents.

Among those is the low-carbohydrate Atkins Diet which has proven successful in suppressing seizures in a small series of patients. The review, explores the benefits of low-carbohydrate, high protein and other restricted dietary therapies for patients with epilepsy.

There are a number of diets being tried to help people with epilepsy. The ketogenic diet, a high fat, adequate protein, and low carbohydrate diet, is the most well known of dietary therapies amongst children with the condition.

Another treatment, still in preliminary stages, is a diet high in polyunsaturated fatty acids, which may be another option to control seizures. A diet enriched in these acids has shown to help in brain development and decreases the excitability of nerve cells that can induce seizures.

The researchers claim that these diets have been successful to a point, but each has drawbacks in terms of implementation. They also suggest that as success has been observed with the Atkins diet, people with epilepsy might find this diet to be easier to follow.

Dr Carl Stafstrom, professor of neurology and pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who undertook the review, said:

"Unfortunately, our knowledge about the relation between nutrition and epilepsy is in its infancy. Aside from the ketogenic diet, nutritional modalities to treat epilepsy are premature. Nevertheless, as indicated in this review, several potential treatment adjuncts are on the horizon. The potential benefits of dietary alterations comprise an intriguing and novel approach to epilepsy treatment."

People with epilepsy should not undertake a diet such as the Atkins Diet or the Ketogenic Diet without medical supervision.

—EPILEPSY ACTION

*Editors Note: ERC provides this information for your reference; it should **not** be construed as endorsement of the Atkins nor similar diets (except The Ketogenic Diet under proper medical supervision) as a treatment for seizures.*

Model Of Brain During Seizure Created

Researchers at UC Berkeley & UC San Francisco's Epilepsy Center have created a mathematical model of the electrical activity that occurs in the brain during a seizure, which may help neurologists better understand epilepsy.

By adapting complex equations to describe the architecture of the brain (the same type of equations used to spot trends in the stock market, weather or other complex systems that could be affected by random events), researchers simulated the excitation of neurons in a portion of the brain and found that the stimulus produced traveling waves of electrical activity.

During a seizure, it was noted a strong pattern of electrical signals suddenly emerged from the random fluctuations that characterized normal brain activity. The strong waves moving across the cortex may cause the sudden, unpredictable sensations or uncontrollable movements that may occur during a seizure.

The wave signals from both the model and the observational data were similar in shape, frequency and speed of propagation. This data suggests that the model is accurate.

In the past, researchers and clinicians have relied on data obtained with electrodes. Electrodes reveal the consequence of the abnormal brain activity, but they don't get at the cause. By learning why and how these strong coherent waves progress over the surface of the brain, suggests that we now have a hope of doing something to change the situation by disrupting the signal.

The researchers say this is an early step in creating a model that can provide far more detail about the inner workings of the brain than is possible with electrodes alone.

—EPILEPSY ACTION

Adult Epilepsy Support Group

Meets Second Tuesday of Month at 6:30 PM

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

APRIL 12: Stress Management

MAY 10: Stress Management (Part II)

Epilepsy is as likely to begin in a person's 60s, 70s or 80s as it is during the first ten years of life.

Medication Card For Uninsured

The recently implemented Together Rx Access™ Card program may soon provide approximately 36 million uninsured Americans under age 65 with significant discounts on a wide array of brand-name and generic prescription products.

The program offers savings of between 25 to 40 % on prescriptions. Savings may vary depending on the pharmacy's customary product pricing and the savings program offered by the participating company that makes the drug. Each participating company sets its own level of savings and decides what medications will be included in the program.

The Together Rx Access™ Card program offers savings on 275 brand-name medications, and was launched in a joint effort by 10 companies: Abbott, AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, GlaxoSmithKline, members of the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, Novartis, Pfizer, Sanofi-Aventis Group, Takeda and TAP Pharmaceutical Products Inc.

Among the 275 brand-name medications offered, there are 10 that are commonly used for epilepsy: Depakote, Depakote ER, Depakote Sprinkle Capsules, Dilantin, Lamictal, Neurontin, Tegretol XR, Topamax, Trileptal and Zarontin.

Lack of affordable health insurance – and particularly insurance that covers prescription medicines – is the biggest barrier to quality healthcare in this country today. For people with epilepsy who must rely upon medication to control their health condition — there are no reasonable and affordable alternatives to good health insurance coverage that includes prescription drugs. The non-Medicare population may find the Together Rx Access™ Card helpful.

Last year, 45 million Americans were uninsured, and 8.4 million of those were children. Epilepsy, which affects 2.5 million Americans, is most common in two groups: children under age 2 and people over age 65. The latter group, because it qualifies for Medicare, is not eligible for this program. Families of uninsured children, however, should seriously consider enrolling their children because they are three times less likely than insured children to get a prescription they need.

Adults, particularly minorities, are equally susceptible to prescrip-

tion hardships. Incidences of epilepsy are most common in African Americans, and minorities account for 52 % of the uninsured population. Hispanics, however, are the most likely to be uninsured. Approximately 35.4% of working Hispanic adults are uninsured, compared with 18.4% of working African American and 11.3% of working Caucasian adults. Adults, particularly minorities, are equally susceptible to prescription hardships. Incidences of epilepsy are most common in African Americans, and minorities account for 52 % of the uninsured population. Hispanics, however, are the most likely to be uninsured. Approximately 35.4% of working Hispanic adults are uninsured, compared with 18.4% of working African American and 11.3% of working Caucasian adults.

To qualify for the Together Rx Access™ Card, applicants must be legal U.S. residents under age 65 and otherwise not eligible for Medicare, without public or private prescription drug coverage and with incomes of up to \$30,000 for a single person or \$60,000 for a family of four. Income eligibility is adjusted for family size.

To enroll, patients may either call (800) 444-4106, or go to TogetherRXaccess.com. Enrollment forms and information is also available through participating pharmacies and in physicians' offices.

—EPILEPSY FOUNDATION

Epilepsy Clinical Trials in Wichita

Via Christi Comprehensive Epilepsy Center (VCEC) is one of twenty centers The N.I.H. has selected to participate in a study comparing early surgery and early drug therapy in the treatment of epilepsy. Much of this research is only offered at prestigious academic centers like Harvard, Emory, & Baylor in major metropolitan cities.

Wichita is one of only a handful of sites to in the country to be selected for the study, sometimes with the next nearest site being places like St. Louis or Houston. This has allowed patients from Kansas and its surrounding states to stay close to home while seeking the most current epilepsy treatments.

Under Director, Kore Liow, MD, Wichita has become a very busy clinical research site. The Center is conducting several other clinical trials in addition to the N.I.H. study. Patients have come to VCEC from 74 counties in Kansas, and 9 other states. The Center also operates a Level 4 Surgical Epilepsy Program. For more information, call (316) 268-8500.

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