

Social Aspects of Epilepsy

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The falling sickness

Few medical conditions have attracted so much attention and generated so much controversy as epilepsy. It is a common condition that affects millions of people, yet no other disorder can claim to be as misunderstood.

In Ireland epilepsy is a subject that was rarely talked about and carried a considerable social *stigma*. The reasons for this are understandable. To observers, seizures can be frightening, confusing and even violent occurrences during which people that are outwardly identical to themselves suddenly lose consciousness.

Epilepsy is a very complex medical condition and from our speakers today we can rest assured that we are receiving the best of medical care in terms of drug treatments and research. However we must also recognize that epilepsy is more than a medical condition. It is also has many complex social issues and realities for all involved.

Once given a diagnosis of epilepsy the person may experience a number of emotions shock, despair, fear and loss. The *Stigma* is a heightened emotion as myths about this condition's origin are still in evidence even today.

To be diagnosed with any long-term chronic condition is difficult for all involved, it is doubtful if any other chronic condition has the secretive impact as a diagnosis of epilepsy. However this needn't be the case.

The Family

When a person has epilepsy, the whole family experiences it. We feel it is important for people with epilepsy to understand that there is also an impact for the people who care for them. Our daily routines bring up all types of questions for all concerned.



Can my teen go away to college?

will they ever be able to work full time?

Will they become co dependent?

Can they drive?



Training For Success

Due to the high levels of unemployment among people with Epilepsy in Ireland, The Irish Epilepsy Association designed a course to meet and address the social issues of people with epilepsy in our communities.

Training For Success was first established in 1998 as part of a HORIZON project. The aim was to address the needs of young adults with epilepsy in accessing meaningful employment accesses to further or third level education. More importantly our aim was to provide a person centred approach looking at every aspect of the person.

The Institute of Technology Campus



What is so unique about Training for Success

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual including: aesthetic, creative, emotional, intellectual & physical development. In developing Training For Success Brainwave & The Institute of Technology Sligo, adopted a holistic approach, which focused on two main areas.

Participants in Training For Success are provided with the information and resources to plan and act on their chosen career options. Based on the principles of self-advocacy and personal choice, the student begin the process of confidence building through the media of debate and discussion and communications.

The training and education of young people with epilepsy focuses on empowerment and enables the individual to break the 'vicious cycle' of dependency. For this reason, Training For Success places great importance on the whole area of personal development. In covering these areas students are provided with the necessary skills to seek meaningful employment, further education, and independent living.

Negative language

The first approach we take is to look at is the misuse of language around Epilepsy

Fits

Spells

Turns

Epileptic



Seizures

Epileptic is the condition
not the person

The holistic nature of Training For Success is reflected in the course content

- Drama / Visual Art
- Epilepsy management
- independent living
- Equality studies
- Career Planning
- First Aid
- Spanish
- Communications
- Committee skills
- Advocacy & Assertiveness
- Health & Fitness
- Creative Writing
- Information technology
- Work Experience
- Maths
- Humanities
- Engineering

On Campus Services

- **Chaplaincy Service**
- **Monetary Advice**
- **Clubs & Societies**
- **Student Health Service**
- **Access Officer**
- **Student Union**
- **Student councillor**

Graduation 2005



Graduates for Training for Success

Those who have graduated from the programme have taken up a variety of career paths. While many have found their way into open employment market, some have opted for third level education and further education.



Epilepsy Management

We have found if a person with epilepsy learns to be anxious and fearful about epilepsy, they become sheltered from the outside world by well meaning parents and careers.

This in the long term can lead to over protection. Epilepsy then becomes the dominant feature of life which in turn leads to immaturity and dependency both in Childhood and in adulthood

Taking and Giving control

We encourage our students to take control and treat seizures as a temporary inconvenience.

Join in with you peers and share in community and family life, this way you will have a better chance of becoming a more secure and independent person by not hiding the condition and having open communication you are taking control.

Become expert in your own Epilepsy and Drug management.
Remember Mums and Dads the importance of giving back control . It is their epilepsy, their medication and they have to manage it.
Communication in the family is the key and will elevate the tensions and fears around seizures.

Congratulations
on the wonderful work and all you
achievements in the past 10 years