

Brain surgery alleviates epilepsy in some children according to study

Durham, N.C.—While modern drugs have brought relief to many youngsters who have epilepsy, about 20 percent of these children do not respond well to anticonvulsants. For some, surgical removal of an area of the brain—usually the size of a child's fist—is the answer.

"Surgery has a proven track record for being a safe and effective treatment for adults with epilepsy," said Dr. Darrell V. Lewis, associate professor in the division of neurology in the Department of Pediatrics at Duke University Medical Center.

"In the last two decades, more physicians have recognized that early surgical treatment of children whose seizures are not stopped by medications will markedly improve the child's ultimate social and intellectual development."

Lewis is with Duke's Center for the Advanced Study of Epilepsy, which is directed by Dr. James O. McNamara, professor of neurology. The

center, which receives most of its referrals from the Southeast, evaluates 20 to 30 children as potential candidates for surgery per year. Only 10 to 15 of them prove to have a localized area of seizure onset that can be removed surgically.

Most types of epilepsy are genetically inherited or appear following head injury or stroke. The seizures, which can occur as infrequently as one or two per month or as often as hundred per day, are caused by a temporary dysfunction of the brain due to excessive and abnormal discharges of its neurons.

Candidates for surgery must meet several criteria. "Their condition must be medically intractable," Lewis said. "Their medical records must show that, even with the best anticonvulsants, they had no relief. For these children, the medications are just as much trouble as seizures."

The medications cause drowsiness, coordination problems, irritability and disturbance of sleep. The most subtle—and sometimes the only—side effect, an interference of learning and memory capacities, is not easily detected by physicians, Lewis said.

The seizures also must be the principal problem that prevents a child from leading a productive life. Some children may have overwhelming problems in addition to epilepsy, and surgery would be of no benefit, Lewis said.

There are several types of seizures, but those who suffer from partial seizures are the best candidates for surgery. Partial seizures, which commonly have their onset in childhood, begin in one area of the brain and can spread to other areas.

"For example, a seizure beginning in the visual cortex may spread to the temporal lobe," Lewis said. "The

child may first see flashing lights and then, lose consciousness as more areas of the brain become involved."

When areas of the brain controlling motor functions are involved, the child's body will become stiff. Partial seizures sometimes lead to grand mal convulsions.

Like other epileptic seizures, partial seizures often have no obvious lesion, such as a tumor, to cause their occurrence, Lewis said. But, with testing, physicians often can pinpoint the area of the brain where the seizure originates.

Using video-EEG monitoring equipment throughout a one-to-two week hospital stay, physicians can monitor the child's brain activity as well as make audio-video recordings to determine the nature of the child's seizures.

"We have to make sure we see all of the seizure types of each patient," Lewis said. Different types of seizures may originate from different

sections of the brain.

An additional evaluation tool used is magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which is a sensitive brain-imaging technique brain scan that can reveal abnormalities missed by other tests.

Psychological tests to evaluate memory, IQ and personality are also given to help determine whether the right or left hemisphere is involved. "These tests are also useful in predicting how well the child will do after surgery," he said. "Follow-up testing is also done after surgery. We often see small increases in IQ."

If the neurologist cannot determine the area of the brain where seizures begin, another test, depth electrodes recordings, may be necessary. Electrodes are implanted in the brain for as long as several weeks to record brain activity during seizures. However, this is a surgical procedure and is not without some risk of complications.

Once the area is defined, the physician must evaluate the risks of surgery. "The affected area—most commonly it's the temporal lobe—is removed only if no neurological problem would result," Lewis said.

Surgery can yield dramatic results. After temporal lobe surgery, two out of three patients can be rendered seizure-free with most others experiencing a significant decrease in the number of seizures.

The most important function of the temporal lobes is memory, but the child experiences little loss of memory following surgery.

"In fact, because the child is no longer hindered by seizures and medications can be reduced, his school work improves, and he makes better social adjustments," he said.

Home loan points may not win you many tax deductions

If you bought or refinanced your home this year, you should be aware of the rules surrounding the deductibility of certain costs incurred in the process of financing house points.

According to the North Carolina Association of CPAs, home mortgage or equity loan points are generally deductible, but there are some provisions that may force you to spread the deduction over the life of the loan.

The term "point" is sometimes used to describe certain charges paid by a borrower. They are also called loan origination fees, maximum loan charges, or premium charges. If the payment of any of these charges is only for the use of money, it could be deductible.

Points are treated as prepaid interest are generally deducted over the period of the loan unless they are incurred on a loan to buy or improve your principal residence. In this case, points are deductible in the year paid, provided:

1. The loan is secured by your principal residence;
2. The charging of points is an established business practice in your geographic area in which the loan is made;
3. The points paid did not exceed the number of points generally charged in your area.

In order to get a deduction for points, the loan document should clearly establish that the points were

not paid for any specific services that the lender performed in connection with your account under the loan contract. Separate charges should be indicated on the loan agreement. In addition, you should write a separate check for the points. Don't have the points paid out of the mortgage proceeds as they may then become deductible over the term of the loan.

To determine the annual deduction allowed for points spread over the life of the loan, the IRS, as a matter of "administrative convenience," allows most people to allocate the points ratably. That means you can divide the total cost of the points by the total number of periodic payments due over the life of the loan.

That figure is then multiplied by the number of payments made in the current year.

For example, in June of this year you paid \$3,600 in points that do not meet the tests for full deductibility in the current year. The term of the loan is 30 years with payments made monthly. That means for this year's taxes, you may deduct \$60 of the point cost. (\$3,600 divided by 360 payments times 6 payments made.)

Generally, points you pay in refinancing a mortgage, regardless of how you arrange to pay them, are not deductible in full in the year you pay them unless they are paid in connection with the purchase of or improvement of a home. If, however,

you used only a portion of the loan on home improvements, then only a portion of the points is deductible.

For example: you took out a home equity loan of \$50,000 of which \$25,000 was spent on home improvements and \$25,000 on consolidating other debts. At the time of closing you paid two points or \$1,000. According to the IRS, you may deduct only 50 percent of the points this year with the other half deducted over the life of the loan. This is because only half of the loan went for home improvements.

CPAs advise you to closely examine when and how you paid any points to determine their deductibility. If you are not sure, consult your tax professional.

Information on planting and keeping oriental gardens

ORIENTAL GARDENS
N.C. BOTANICAL GARDEN

As more and more Westerners visit the Orient, the serenity of Oriental gardens becomes better known, say experts at the N. C. Botanical Garden at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Japanese and Chinese gardens have evolved into several styles or schools over thousand of years. Meanwhile, Western gardens have recently gone beyond medicinal and agricultural plantings.

Several distinctive elements are noticeable in Asiatic gardens. These are tranquility, privacy, a visual link between house and garden, the use of specific materials and a sense of proportion.

The tranquility and privacy are achieved by some sort of wall, some-

times hidden behind plantings, often evergreens severely pruned to give a sense of line to one part of the garden picture. An illusion of an idealized natural environment is created on a scale in proportion to humans, not nature.

Oriental gardens should offer as satisfying a picture looking from the house as well as from within the garden itself.

Stepping stones can carry the eye between the house and garden. An illusion of a path produced by moving water or by raked river rocks or sand simulating water in movement can connect the house and garden.

Deciduous trees or shrubs can provide a colorful accent at blooming time or can add to the interesting line and shape of bare branches in winter. Pruning can take advantage of the

effect of snow lying on bare tree branches.

The whole concept of Oriental gardens is constructed with detailed planning, so that each part is perfect and artistic in itself and yet still fills its place in the total design.

Bamboo, although it must be replaced periodically, is used extensively for walls, gates and other artistic structures.

Rocks are important in the garden design. Large rocks can represent mountains in the scaled-down natural landscape. Others serve as stepping stones or islands in a pool that may represent a lake.

Smaller rocks, sometimes chosen for their grain, or raked sand can represent water in mo'ement. All these are not just any rocks found

nearby, but especially chosen for their size and shape. Works of art in themselves, they represent specific natural components of the entire picture.

Zen gardens take the philosophy further. Zen meditation is a discipline in which the mind is emptied of the problems of daily life, creating an incompleteness. Important to this type of garden is the use of the imagination on the part of the viewer. For example, paths leading around partially seen curves.

Oriental gardens are the result of much study and planning and are not always compatible with the Western attitude toward gardening. Eastern thought attempts to show that humans are the masters of nature.

Books are available in local libraries and bookshops, some with imagination-provoking photographs, for North Carolina gardeners interested

in creating aspects of Oriental gardens.

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Nominations sought for Ready awards

Raleigh—Nominations are now being sought for the I.E. Ready Honorary Awards established to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the North Carolina Community College System.

Legislation creating the community college system—now the third largest in the nation with 58 campuses statewide—was ratified May 17, 1963.

The State Board of Community Colleges will present the awards to individuals who have contributed significantly to the system's growth and

development. I.E. Ready, who died in March, was among the principal authors of the system's founding legislation and served as its first director for almost eight years.

Nominations should be submitted no later than Feb. 1, 1988, to Helen Dowdy, Department of Community Colleges board liaison, at 200 W. Jones St., Raleigh, NC 27603-1337. To obtain an official nomination form, call Dowdy at 733-7051, extension 730.

Winners will be selected by a special awards committee of system trustees, institution presidents,

board members and DCC officials appointed by John A. Forlines Jr., board chairman. The honorees will be recognized at an awards ceremony in Raleigh May 17, 1988, as part of the silver anniversary celebration.

Employees of the community college system are excluded from nomination.

During its 25-year history, North Carolina's community college system has earned a national reputation for its emphasis on vocational and technical training and its commitment to meeting business and industry's needs for skilled workers.


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Free financial aid calendars available

"FREE FINANCIAL AID PLANNING CALENDAR AVAILABLE"

Students in need of funding for the current and next academic terms were urged to order a free financial aid planning calendar from The Scholarship Bank. This vital planner includes critical aid deadlines, addresses and phone numbers of aid sources and tips on applying for aid.

According to the director, Steve Danz, over 500 million dollars is available in private aid to college students, and in many cases can cover up to twenty-five percent of a student's annual college costs. These

funds are contributed by corporations, trade, civic and non-profit foundations. They are normally awarded on non-traditional basis, such as academic standing, college major, geographic preferences, and even on a student's willingness to undertake a special research project or enter a contest. Parental factors such as union, employer or military affiliation is also considered by some donors.

The Scholarship Bank works with financial aids offices throughout the US to distribute information on the over 5,000 sources. Interested stu-

dents may receive a computer-generated print-out of up to 65 sources of private financial aid that they appear specifically qualified to receive. According to the director, many sources are renewable annually and have an average value in excess of \$1,000.00.

Students interested in receiving the free aid calendar and information on the scholarship programs should send a stamped, business-sized self-addressed envelope to The Scholarship Bank, 4626 N. Grand, Covina, CA. 91724.

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Bible	12-3	2-25	Thur.	1-3	Senior Center	W. Martin	\$20
Bible	12-4	2-26	Fri.	11-1	Senior Center	W. Martin	\$20
Computer Understanding	12-1	2-23	Tues.	7-10	Vocational Cntr.	TBA	\$15
Sewing	11-30	2-22	Mon.	10-1	Wynn Fork	E. Hurdle	\$20
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Typing	12-1	2-23	Tues.	7-10	Vocational Cntr.	TBA	\$15
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Registration will be during the first two weeks at the beginning of the class period for the above general interest (non-credit) courses. Registration is on a first-come, first served basis. Persons 65 years of age and over may enroll at no charge for tuition. Social Security numbers will be needed.

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