Epilepsy Surgery Effect on Mood and Behavior in Children Differs by Surgical Site and Hemisphere

Embargoed for release until 9:00 AM (EST), December 8th

Washington, D.C., December 8, 2013 - Children with epilepsy are at high risk for depression, anxiety, and behavioral functioning disorders. Mood and behavior are known to change or improve in children following epilepsy surgery, but research is inconsistent concerning the extent of the change.

The results of a collaborative study of 101 pediatric epilepsy surgery patients were reported today at the American Epilepsy Society (AES) 67th Annual meeting. The study, by a collaborative team of investigators from the Cleveland Clinic and University of Pittsburgh, examined changes in mood, anxiety, and behavioral functioning following epilepsy surgery in children 5 to 16 years of age and examined the role of surgical site (frontal / temporal) and hemisphere (left / right) in these outcomes. (Platform B.06 / Abstract 1738780 – Mood and Behavior Outcomes Following Pediatric Epilepsy Surgery.)

Children in the study and their primary caregivers completed standardized questionnaires that measure emotional and behavioral functioning. To determine the nature and extent of change, these measures were administered prior to surgery and again approximately ten months later. An analysis of each child’s change scores revealed clinically significant improvements in postoperative mood, anxiety, and behavior in a substantial portion of the children.

“We were pleased to discover that children generally experience improvements in mood and behavior following epilepsy surgery,” said lead author Elizabeth Andresen, Ph.D., of the Cleveland Clinic. “While children with frontal lobe epilepsy had greater symptoms of depression and anxiety before surgery than children with temporal lobe epilepsy, these symptoms improved significantly following surgery to levels comparable to or below the temporal lobe group. Interestingly, these relationships were most apparent in children who underwent left-sided surgeries.”

The research report has received this year’s AES Rebecca Goldberg Kaufman Award. The award is given to the highest ranked research of significance in the area of psychosocial aspects of epilepsy selected from among scientific reports presented at the AES annual meeting.

Study Authors:
Editors Note: Authors of this study will be available at a press briefing at 9:00 am (EST), December 8, in the onsite pressroom, Room 209-A, Level 2 of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. The call-in number for off-site journalists is 1-605-475-4000, passcode 521653#.

About epilepsy
The epilepsies affect 50 million people worldwide, including three million in the United States. The disorder can have a single specific, well-defined cause, such as a head injury, or manifest as a syndrome with a complex of symptoms. It is the third most common neurological disorder after Alzheimer’s disease and stroke.

About the American Epilepsy Society (AES)
The American Epilepsy Society, based in West Hartford, Conn., seeks to advance and improve the treatment of epilepsy through the promotion of epilepsy research and education for healthcare professionals. The Society’s annual meeting is the largest scientific meeting in epilepsy and each year attracts some 4,000 physicians, scientists and allied healthcare professionals from around the world.

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