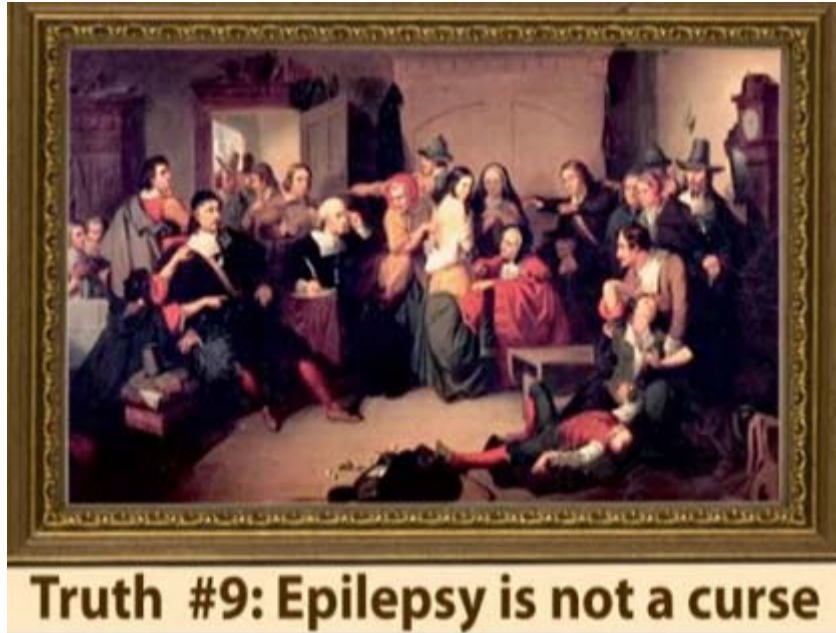


Although epilepsy has affected people for millions of years, myths about the disorder still abound. Let's look at some basic facts about epilepsy.

Up to 60 million people in the world currently have epilepsy, a neurological condition that affects the nervous system. Epilepsy is a condition of recurrent seizures. A seizure is a sudden, excessive discharge of electrical activity in the nervous system that causes a change in behavior, movement, sensation or consciousness. Because epilepsy varies from person to person, it can be helpful to examine some critical facts about the condition. Let's look at ten of them.

1. People with epilepsy should not be called "epileptics," as this term defines someone by one trait only. It is better to use the term "a person with epilepsy." To many, the term "seizure disorder" is also synonymous with epilepsy.
2. Another truth about epilepsy is that people with the condition are seldom brain damaged. While brain function can be temporarily disturbed by seizures, brain damage or a permanent problem with the brain structure is not synonymous with epilepsy.
3. Like any other group, people with epilepsy have different intellectual abilities. Some are brilliant, while others have problems with basic cognitive functioning. For the most part, though, people with epilepsy have normal intelligence.
4. Although seizures can be confusing and are often misconstrued as violent or challenging behavior, people with epilepsy have no greater tendency toward violence or aggression than do others.
5. Despite ancient falsehood that put epilepsy in the same class as mental illness, one has nothing to do with the other.
6. Single seizures that last less than ten minutes are not known to cause brain damage or injury in the long-term. While there may be a cumulative effect from frequent seizures, this appears to be rare.
7. Another fact about epilepsy is that the condition is not usually inherited. While some types of epilepsy are passed on through family, the majority of cases have unknown or environmental causes.
8. Most people who develop epilepsy have seizures and require medication for only a small portion of their lives. In fact, about 60% of people find that it goes away with treatment.

9. Witch hunting in the 1490s focused on finding people with seizures and even the Bible declares that epilepsy is caused by an internal devil. Contrary to these stigmas, however, epilepsy is a medical problem and nothing more.



Truth #9: Epilepsy is not a curse

10. Perhaps the most liberating truth surrounding epilepsy is that it is perfectly compatible with a normal happy life. A positive outlook, a supportive environment and good medical care usually make it possible to live fruitfully with epilepsy.

Although epilepsy has generated fear and confusion in the past, modern medicine has been able to break down many of the myths about this common condition. Remember, if you think you may have epilepsy, please see your doctor.