

Quality of life study examines burden of epilepsy

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A new study published in *Epilepsia* is the first to assess the prevalence of self-reported active epilepsy and health-related quality of life among adults with epilepsy in California.

Drawing on data collected in the 2003 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), the nation's largest state health survey, the study finds that in 2003, almost 300,000 (1.2 percent) adults had a self-reported history of epilepsy, while 182,000 (0.7 percent) were living with active epilepsy - either taking medication or experiencing at least one seizure within the past three months.

“As with other chronic diseases, epilepsy takes a toll on physical and mental health, including interfering with daily activities,” note Rosemarie Kobau and David J. Thurman, authors of the study, which finds that 36 percent of adults living with active epilepsy reported being physically disabled or unable to work, compared to just 5 percent of adults without the disorder. Adults with recent seizures reported between 9-12 days in the past month of impaired physical or mental health, or days when their daily activities were limited, compared to only 2-4 days for those without the disorder.

People with epilepsy were found to have worse general health status and to engage in some risky behaviors, such as smoking. People with epilepsy were more likely to be unemployed, and to live in lower-income households. Among adults with active epilepsy who had suffered a seizure within the past three months, about one-quarter reported not

taking any medication for their disorder.

Because the findings show that people with epilepsy have unmet physical and mental health needs, healthcare providers and policy makers may propose interventions such as improved access to mental health care, job training and self-management programs to improve health outcomes in people with epilepsy, conclude the authors.

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

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