



HEALTH AWARENESS

A Common Cause Of “Senior Moments”

(NAPSA)—When people in their 60s, 70s or 80s experience unusual feelings—lost time, suspended awareness, confusion, seizures—they may think they’re a regular part of aging. But they could be signs of epilepsy, a condition that affects 300,000 older Americans.

Epilepsy is a functional disorder of the brain, a kind of occasional glitch in the electrical system that controls everything we feel and do. These brief malfunctions, called seizures, may temporarily block awareness. They can also cause uncontrollable shaking, convulsions, confusion or affect the senses.

Knowing The Facts

“For a long time epilepsy has been seen as a condition that affects young people, but now we know it can affect anyone at any age,” says Dr. Ilo Leppik, director of research at MINCEP Epilepsy Care Center in Minneapolis and past chairman of the Professional Advisory Board of the Epilepsy Foundation.

It’s a truth that Jeanette Fisher knows all too well. She had never experienced seizures in her life when, at 76, she started blacking out, turning rigid and exhibiting signs of dementia.

Her doctor assumed she needed to move to a nursing home. But he first suggested a second opinion from Dr. Leppik, who, after running tests and examining her medications, devised a regimen to help Fisher treat her epilepsy.

“She had come into the hospital in a wheelchair, confused and



It’s important for seniors to know the signs of epilepsy.

bound for the nursing home, but left under her own power,” says Dr. Leppik.

Recognizing Symptoms

Seizures among seniors are often subtle—spaced out episodes alternately described as “going to a different place” or “thoughts skipping.” To recognize seizures in seniors, Dr. Leppik suggests:

- Looking for whether these kinds of incidents are happening on a routine basis and if they are reasonably distinct.
- Watching for alterations in a loved one’s behavior.
- Comparing notes with relatives to see if they have observed the same kinds of inconsistencies.

“People might think, ‘Mom is tired, she’s having a senior moment,’” says Dr. Leppik. “Sometimes that’s how symptoms of epilepsy are dismissed. That’s why it’s important to watch for signs.”

For more information, visit www.epilepsyfoundation.org.