



Health Awareness

Epilepsy And The Hispanic Community

(NAPSA)—Despite its prevalence, many people do not understand epilepsy and seizure disorders, so scientists and others are working on ways to put an end to persistent myths and misconceptions about the condition. These can lead to discrimination in the workplace, or at school, and hinder early diagnosis and timely treatment of people with the disorder.

Among the nation's 2.7 million people who have epilepsy, 400,000 are Hispanics. A survey conducted by the Epilepsy Foundation about the beliefs and attitudes of the Latino community toward epilepsy found that one-fourth of Hispanics relate seizures to death and more than half would not disclose that a family member has epilepsy, indicating a high degree of fear and stigma associated with the condition.

About 31 percent of Hispanics believe people with epilepsy cannot hold a job, compared to the 3 percent of non-Hispanics who have this belief. The same number of Hispanics believe people with epilepsy are dangerous to others, while 17 percent of non-Hispanics agree—a disturbing finding in both groups. In addition, approximately 9 percent of Hispanics believe people with epilepsy lack intelligence or spiritual faith. The same number believes the condition is contagious. Nine percent also believe epilepsy is caused by one's sins or an evil spirit.

As for treatments, 30 percent believe in herbal remedies and 6 percent think a spiritual healer or exorcism is best. These treatment beliefs are dangerous because they

What Is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a disorder of the nervous system that produces sudden, brief surges of electrical energy in the brain. Instead of firing on and off, millions of brain cells begin firing together, overwhelming other brain activity. These episodes are called seizures. They alter a person's awareness, movements or actions for a few seconds or minutes. If a person has seizures more than once for no apparent reason, the condition is called epilepsy.



can lead to significant diagnostic delays, which can cause unnecessary disabilities and social isolation.

"Epilepsy can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time," said Eric Hargis, president and CEO of the Epilepsy Foundation. "People must understand that epilepsy is a manageable, treatable condition and that leading a productive life is possible. Our aim is to heighten the Hispanic community's knowledge of epilepsy, as well as help them get the treatment they need."

The campaign "Epilepsy: It's More Common Than You Think" is part of the Foundation's outreach to diverse populations and its work to ensure that people with seizures can participate in all of life's experiences. It also seeks to prevent, control and cure epilepsy through research, education, advocacy and services.

To help or be helped, call (800) 332-1000. Answers to questions may also be found at www.epilepsyfoundation.org. For information in Spanish, call (866) 748-8008 or visit www.fundacionparalaepilepsia.org.