

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Inappropriate Emotions? Understanding Involuntary Expressions

(NAPSA)—Emotions can be difficult to understand, even when they're in proper working order. But what do you make of someone who cries when happy, laughs at sad stories or expresses anger and frustration for no apparent reason?

Chances are, there's a medical explanation, which might provide a better understanding for friends and loved ones: When disease or injury damages the brain, this can affect the area of the brain that controls normal expression of emotion. This damage can disrupt brain signaling causing a "short circuit" and triggering the symptoms of Involuntary Emotional Expression Disorder (IEED).

A patient suffering from IEED might display symptoms such as unpredictable episodes of laughing, crying, anger or frustration that are unrelated to the situation at hand. These episodes can often be uncomfortable and embarrassing for the patient and their loved ones.

IEED occurs in individuals with underlying neurological conditions, including dementias such as Alzheimer's disease; neurological injuries such as stroke and traumatic brain injury; multiple sclerosis; amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease), and Parkinson's disease.

But because IEED is not as widely recognized as other conditions, finding information can pose some challenges. In fact, you may find that some health care professionals are not as familiar with the disorder as you would expect, and often times IEED is mistaken for other conditions. For example, since frequent crying episodes are a common symptom of IEED, the clinician must distinguish these from depression. Therefore, it is imperative that you arm yourself with information to use as a basis for your conversation with your doctor.

Taking Charge

"The inability to control one's emotions can be very confusing



There may be new hope for people with a common yet widely misunderstood condition.

and frustrating for IEED patients and their loved ones," says Dr. Ralph W. Richter, Clinical Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at Oklahoma University in Tulsa. "The condition is often difficult to diagnose and may often be misdiagnosed, so it is important for patients and caregivers to closely monitor symptoms of IEED and discuss them with their doctor. We are continuously learning more about IEED with the goal to provide doctors, patients and caregivers with the necessary information that allows them to better understand and recognize IEED."

Since your doctor may not be able to witness your IEED symptoms, he or she must rely heavily on information shared during office visits. You should be as specific as possible when describing the severity, frequency and duration of episodes. In addition, you can talk with your doctor about working to develop an action plan to help you manage daily life with IEED, including guidance and resources for dealing with embarrassment and social anxiety that may occur as effects of coping with the disorder.

If you or your loved one has symptoms of IEED, there is hope. Speak with your healthcare provider about ways to manage IEED, call (866) 740-4333 or visit www.ieed.org.