



SEISMIC

Sydney Epilepsy Incidence
Study to Measure Illness
Consequences

[22 October 2009]

Media Release

FIRST MAJOR AUSTRALIAN STUDY INTO EPILEPSY LAUNCHED WITH NHMRC FUNDING

The Sydney Epilepsy Incidence Study to Measure Illness Consequences (SEISMIC) has been awarded a \$676,050 grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council's Partnerships for Better Health Grants programme.

The funding will enable Australia's first comprehensive epidemiological research on epilepsy and will be conducted in NSW over the next 4 years through a partnership between Epilepsy Action Australia (EAA); The George Institute for International Health, The University of Sydney, and Sydney South West Area Health Authority, and several key Sydney based neurologists.

"We're delighted that the first major Australian incidence study of epilepsy will be made possible with this grant from the NHMRC. SEISMIC is a joint initiative of The George Institute and Epilepsy Action Australia to examine the incidence, psychosocial impact and the household economic burden of epilepsy in a large and representative population," said Carol Ireland, Chief Executive Officer, EAA.

"The research will produce evidence based data that will inform service delivery and government health and social policy to better meet the needs and improve the quality of life for people living with epilepsy. As Australia's only national service provider this research will enable us to provide better support to the patient population," added Ms Ireland.

Professor Craig Anderson, The George Institute's Principal Investigator for SEISMIC said that to date, there had been no major epidemiological research on epilepsy conducted in Australia. "Both policy-makers and patient support groups have been forced to rely on overseas research and apply it to the Australian context. With an estimated 440,000 Australians (or 1-2% of the population) expected to be affected by epilepsy sometime during their lifetime this was clearly an undesirable situation."



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SEISMIC will study a population based patient cohort over a 4 year period gathering information on the process of care from the first presentation with a seizure through to diagnosis of epilepsy, treatment and follow-up. The study will provide three main outcomes:

- the first study to provide information on the burden of epilepsy to the Australian Health System;
- assessing the psychological impact prospectively across the population for all cases of epilepsy, not just severe clinical cases, and at the inception of disease for individuals and families;
- Data on the impact of epilepsy on quality of life and families.

“SEISMIC will play a significant role in filling the current information vacuum that exists on epilepsy. Importantly, SEISMIC will evaluate the current performance of the health and social systems in addressing the needs of those living with epilepsy and will highlight opportunities to improve programs and services, particularly around preventative health and social inclusion”, added Professor Anderson.

“EAA plans to use this data to inform the work it is doing developing a national services strategy for people living with epilepsy and their carers. We hope to be able to work collaboratively with policy makers at all levels to ensure the outcomes of research can be applied immediately to health care practice and policy,” concluded Ms Ireland.

For further information or to arrange interviews with spokespeople regarding the SEISMIC study please call:

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