

## **Socioeconomic and psychological impact of quality of life in Malaysian patients with epilepsy**

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*Objective:* The main objective of this study was to determine the socioeconomic and psychological impact on the quality of life in a subset of epilepsy patients in Malaysia.

*Methods:* This was a cross sectional, hospital based, questionnaire driven prospective study involving 6 centres in Malaysia over a 9 months period in 2001. Patients with epilepsy attending the outpatient clinics in the Physicians and Neurology Departments were recruited.

*Results:* Of the 375 patients studied, 49% were males. The ethnic composition was: Malays (53%), Chinese (26%) and Indians (20%). The mean age was 29 years. The mean duration of epilepsy was 13 years. The seizure frequency was: more than once per month (43%), less than once per month (36%), seizure free (21%). Majority had secondary level of education or higher (82%). The antiepileptic drugs used were: sodium valproate (42%), carbamazepine (42%), phenytoin (24%), lamotrigine (7%), topiramate (3%).

Forty-three percent of the respondents were employed full time, 34% were unemployed or in sheltered workshops, 16% were full time students. Fifty-eight percent felt prejudice and discrimination at work, 57% felt that epilepsy affected their ability to obtain and keep a job, and 52% felt that epilepsy affected their work. Seventy-six percent had fear of being alone, 62% had problems leading an active social life, 51% felt that epilepsy affected their relationships with close friends, 46% concealed the diagnosis from others, and 29% felt that epilepsy affected their self-esteem. Antiepileptic drugs induced side effects were noted in 67%. Of those employed, 85% felt that the drugs affected their work. Univariate analysis revealed that respondents with more frequent seizures were more likely to have no education, be unemployed or underemployed, come from lower income groups, have problems obtaining or keeping a driving license or insurance, and leading an active social life.

*Conclusion,* epilepsy has significant psychological and socioeconomic effects on Malaysian patients with epilepsy.