

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 29, 2008

SEIZURES MAY BE DISGUISED IN MORE THAN 200 SYMPTOMS

Not Everything that Shakes is a Seizure; Some Transient Non-Shaking Spells can be Seizures

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL (February 29, 2008) – When most people think “seizure,” they envision a made-for-television scene with a person falling and suffering from rapid and uncontrollable body shakes, choking, and a loss of consciousness. Fort Lauderdale epilepsy expert, Eduardo Locatelli, MD, warns that this may not always be the case and that there are many types of seizures, including some with very mild symptoms.

“A seizure is a change in sensation, awareness, or behavior brought about by an electrical disturbance in the brain,” said Dr. Locatelli. “If the area of the brain that is responsible for muscle tone is affected, for example, a seizure may involve intermittent dropping of things or tripping. There may be more than 200 symptoms that indicate an epileptic seizure, including brief panic attacks, a temporary lapse of memory or numbness, or language disturbance.”

Such was the case for Genaro Pizza. When he was 10 years old, Pizza was playing cards with friends when his eyes became glazed, and he began staring off into space. He was taken to the nearest hospital where doctors first thought that he might have polio.

While seizures are a symptom of epilepsy, they may be due to other conditions as well. Close to 60 out of 100 people who experience seizures and are said to have epilepsy with no response to medications, do not really have epilepsy. Conversely, since many people experience seizures in subtle ways, they may be unaware that they have epilepsy. The electroencephalogram (EEG) studies that take place in the epilepsy monitoring unit help to draw the most definite conclusion.

Because his staring spells were so subtle, it was difficult for doctors to determine whether they were in fact seizures. After several days of testing, doctors determined that Pizza’s staring spells were epileptic seizures. Unfortunately, he suffered from these five- to 10-second spells for the next 55 years. Pizza was medicated with anti-seizure medications, which had side effects such as fatigue and withdrawal from social settings.

Pizza was referred to Dr. Locatelli, who after the initial exam, decided to place him in a specialized monitoring unit for further evaluation. In the monitoring unit, Pizza was connected to an EEG machine via dozens of tiny wires that were connected to his head. Dr. Locatelli recorded continuous brain wave activity with simultaneous video recording since brain waves during or between seizures may show special patterns. Based on the evaluation of the brain wave activity and the location of the abnormalities, Dr. Locatelli determined that Pizza was a candidate for surgery and could be cured of his seizures.

Pizza had surgery two years ago and has been seizure free ever since.

Since his surgery, Pizza has become a totally different person from the shy man he used to be. He is now extremely outgoing and has a whole new outlook on life.

“I now speak to everyone,” says Pizza. “I love to laugh, tell jokes, and have a good time. Life is great.”

Dr. Locatelli is the medical director of a four-bed epilepsy monitoring unit at Holy Cross Hospital. For more information, visit www.floridaneuroscience.com or call 954-414-9750.

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About Florida Neuroscience Center

Located in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Florida Neuroscience Center is a state-of-the-art private medical practice specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy and other neurological conditions such as headaches and Alzheimer's disease.

The Center's founder and medical director, Eduardo Locatelli, MD, MPH, holds triple boards in neurology, neurophysiology, and neuroimaging. He holds a master's of public health in addition to his medical doctorate degree. Dr. Locatelli has also earned certification as a Six Sigma champion. Dr. Locatelli is also the medical director of the epilepsy monitoring unit at Holy Cross Hospital.

Prior to opening Florida Neuroscience Center, Dr. Locatelli was the director of the epilepsy program, director of medical informatics, and chairman of the ethics committee at Cleveland Clinic Florida. He completed his internship, neurology residency, and fellowship at George Washington University. Additionally, he completed a fellowship at the prestigious National Institutes of Health. He is the co-author of Locatelli & Singh's Handbook of Neurology and many scientific papers.

For more information, visit www.floridaneuroscience.com.

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