

Announcements

National Epilepsy Awareness Month and Veterans Day, November 11, 2016

November is National Epilepsy Awareness Month, and November 11 is Veterans Day. Epilepsy is a brain disorder that causes recurrent seizures, which are characterized by sudden, abnormal electrical activity in the brain that briefly changes the way a person behaves, thinks, or feels. Epilepsy affects 7–10 per 1,000 persons, or approximately 2.9 million persons in the United States (1,2). Although the prevalence of epilepsy in veterans is unknown, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) estimates that during 2012–2014, the prevalence of epilepsy among veterans under treatment at VHA facilities was 13.9 per 1,000 persons (3). Approximately 13% of veterans with seizures were aged <45 years, 39% were aged 45–65 years, and 7% were female (3).

Veterans are at higher risk for developing epilepsy than nonveterans because of an increased likelihood of traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder (4); these conditions are also associated with psychogenic nonepileptic seizures (events caused by psychological distress that resemble seizures, but are not associated with abnormal electrical activity in the brain). In a study published in this issue, veterans with epilepsy who were deployed in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts were found to have a higher prevalence of mental and physical comorbidity and substantially higher mortality than were veterans without epilepsy. The VHA Epilepsy Centers of Excellence (ECoE), a network of 16 sites that was created in 2008, provides comprehensive treatment and support to veterans with epilepsy (i.e., seizure disorders, including psychogenic nonepileptic seizures) (3). The ECoE's video series, *Veterans and Epilepsy: Basic Training*, helps educate veterans, their caregivers, and the general public about living with epilepsy, and helps reduce epilepsy-associated stigma (5).

CDC supports community-based resources and services for all adults with epilepsy and evaluates epilepsy self-management programs for veterans with epilepsy. Information about these services and programs is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/epilepsy>.

References

1. CDC. Epilepsy in the United States. Atlanta, GA: US Health and Human Services, CDC; 2016. <http://www.cdc.gov/epilepsy/basics/fast-facts.htm>
2. Hirtz D, Thurman DJ, Gwinn-Hardy K, Mohamed M, Chaudhuri AR, Zalutsky R. How common are the "common" neurologic disorders? *Neurology* 2007;68:326–37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1212/01.wnl.0000252807.38124.a3>
3. US Department of Veterans Affairs, Epilepsy Centers of Excellence. FY 2015 annual report: improving the health and well-being of veteran patients with epilepsy and other seizure disorders through the integration of clinical care, outreach, research, and education. Washington, DC: US Department of Veterans Affairs; 2016. <http://www.epilepsy.va.gov/Library/ECoENationalAnnualReportFY15.pdf>
4. Rehman R, Kelly PR, Husain AM, Tran TT. Characteristics of veterans diagnosed with seizures within Veterans Health Administration. *J Rehabil Res Dev* 2015;52:751–62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1682/JRRD.2014.10.0241>
5. US Department of Veterans Affairs, Epilepsy Centers of Excellence. Patient/caregiver education. Washington, DC: US Department of Veterans Affairs; 2016. http://www.epilepsy.va.gov/Patient_Education.asp

Get Smart About Antibiotics Week — November 14–20, 2016

Get Smart About Antibiotics Week is November 14–20, 2016. This annual observance is intended to engage health care providers, professional societies, advocacy groups, for-profit companies, state and local health departments, the general public, the media, and others in an effort to improve antibiotic stewardship in outpatient, inpatient, nursing home, and animal health settings. During this week, participants will raise awareness of the threat of antibiotic resistance and emphasize the importance of appropriate antibiotic use across all health care settings. Get Smart About Antibiotics Week coincides with the World Health Organization's World Antibiotic Awareness Week and European Antibiotic Awareness Day (November 18). In addition to the United States and European Union, other participating countries and international organizations include Australia, Canada, and the Pan American Health Organization.

Antibiotic use is the single most important contributing factor to antibiotic resistance in patients. An estimated one third to one half of antibiotic use in humans is either unnecessary or inappropriate in selection, dosing, or duration of treatment. Each year in the United States, 47 million unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions are written in doctors' offices, emergency rooms, and hospital-based clinics, which makes improving antibiotic prescribing and use a national priority. To prevent further emergence of antibiotic resistance while providing safe, high-quality patient care, antibiotics must be used appropriately. This means prescribing antibiotics only when needed and, if they are needed, using them judiciously and correctly.

Preventing the emergence and spread of antibiotic-resistant infections and protecting the nation's health is a CDC priority. CDC has identified four Core Elements of Outpatient Antibiotic Stewardship and will release a document on this topic during Get Smart About Antibiotics Week. A webinar will be offered on November 15 at 1 pm EDT; information is available at <https://cc.readytalk.com/r/bzt89rm0ewrr&com>.