Epilepsy in Women: Role of Paediatricians

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Abstract

Epilepsy is a common neurologic condition with important gender differences in the impact of the disease. Health care providers should discuss contraception and reproductive issues with all their female patients with epilepsy early as they enter puberty. Optimal care requires pre-pregnancy counselling, folate supplementation and discussion on risks related to pregnancy. Anti-epileptic drugs have been implicated as the major cause of teratogenesis, on the other hand, uncontrolled epilepsy is associated with maternal and fetal risk. Optimal seizure control with the lowest effective dose of antiepileptic drug is an important goal during pregnancy. Women with epilepsy should be counselled of breast-feeding and supported in their decision. Understanding the risks and appropriate management of both pregnancy and epilepsy in female patients is essential for the paediatricians. Pregnant women with epilepsy should be jointly managed by a team of professionals that includes neurologists, paediatricians, obstetricians and in some cases, geneticists. (HK J Paediatr (new series) 2005;10:91-95)

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