Locked-In Syndrome

Locked-in syndrome is a rare neurological disorder characterized by complete paralysis of voluntary muscles in all parts of the body (except for those that control eye movement). It may result from traumatic brain injury, vascular diseases, demyelinating diseases, or medication overdose. Individuals with locked-in syndrome are conscious and have cognitive function, but are unable to speak or move. The disorder leaves the patient completely mute and paralyzed. Communication may be possible with blinking eye movements.

TREATMENT

There is no cure for locked-in syndrome, nor is there a standard course of treatment. Functional neuromuscular stimulation may help activate some paralyzed muscles. Several devices to help communication are available. Other treatment is symptomatic and supportive.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The prognosis (likely outcome) for those with locked-in syndrome is poor. The majority of patients do not regain function.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS supports research on neurological disorders such as stroke which may result in locked-in syndrome. The goals of this research are to find ways to prevent, treat, and cure these disorders.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.
Provided by: The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

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