Landau-Kleffner Syndrome

Landau-Kleffner syndrome (LKS), also called acquired epileptiform aphasia, is a rare, childhood neurological disorder characterized by the sudden or gradual development of *aphasia* (loss of language) and an abnormal electro-encephalogram (EEG). LKS affects the parts of the brain that control speech and comprehension (understanding). The disorder usually occurs in children between the ages of 3 and 7. Typically, these children develop normally and then, for no apparent reason, they lose the ability to understand others and to speak. While many of the affected individuals have *seizures* (convulsions), some do not. The disorder is difficult to diagnose and may be misdiagnosed as autism, pervasive developmental disorder, hearing impairment, learning disability, auditory/verbal processing disorder, attention deficit disorder, mental retardation, childhood schizophrenia, or emotional/behavioral problems.

TREATMENT

Treatment for LKS usually consists of medications, such as anticonvulsants and corticosteroids, and speech therapy, which should be started early. Another controversial treatment option involves a surgical technique called multiple subpial transection in which the pathways of abnormal electrical brain activity are severed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The prognosis (likely outcome) for children with LKS varies. Some affected children may have a permanent severe language disorder, while others may regain much of their language abilities (although it may take months or years). In some cases, remissions and relapse may occur. The prognosis is improved when the onset of the disorder is after age 6 and when speech therapy is started early. Seizures generally disappear by adulthood.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS supports broad and varied programs of research on epilepsy and developmental disorders. This research is aimed at discovering new ways to prevent, diagnose, and treat epilepsy and developmental disorders and, ultimately, to find cures for them.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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