

# **SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF EPILEPSY IN SRI LANKAN PATIENTS**

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Data relating to the Medical and Socio-psychological aspects of epilepsy was obtained by direct interview from 315 epileptic patients attending the out-patient clinics in Kandy Hospital.

The median age of the patients was 21 years (range 6-65 years); 60% were males; 88% were Sinhalese Buddhists. The mean ages at onset and treatment were 13.7 years (S. D. 7.4) and 17.9 years (S. D. 8.5) respectively.

Of those patients whose disease had commenced before eighteen years of age, 50% had either not gone to school or left school prematurely. This was due to the fear of having fits in school or on their teachers' advice. Of those who attended school, 35% admitted their performance was adversely affected and 50% had changed their plans for further education.

Differences in teachers' and colleagues' attitudes towards them were felt by 33% and 10% respectively. In none of the above were rural and urban differences.

45% never attempted to find employment, 15% either gave up employment prematurely or failed to gain employment in spite of repeated attempts.

35% of the adults were married. Of the unmarried adults 65% felt that epilepsy reduced their chances of marriage and a similar number did not wish to get married.

Thus, preliminary data clearly shows that epilepsy confers adverse social and psychological effects on the majority of the patients. This establishes the need to educate the public, specially the key groups, if management and rehabilitation plans are to be successful.