**Epilepsy Awareness and Protocol**

**Epilepsy Awareness**

Epilepsy is a tendency to recurrent seizures originating in the brain. It can be an inherited condition but can also be the result of physical damage to the brain as a result of a head injury, an infection, substance abuse, tumour or stroke. An epileptic seizure is an intermittent disturbance of consciousness, behaviour, emotion, motor function, perception or sensation. Seizures can be partial, affecting part of the brain, or generalised, affecting the entire brain and resulting in a loss of consciousness.

**Partial Seizures can be simple or complex:**

* A simple partial seizure does not cause a loss of consciousness
* A complex partial seizure can cause a change to consciousness and perception

**Generalised Seizures typically occur in 5 sub types:**

* Absence: Staring and blinking
* Myoclonic: Brief jerking movements, usually of upper body
* Tonic-clonic: Going stiff and falling - followed by convulsions (jerking movements)
* Tonic: Going stiff and falling without convulsions
* Atonic: Falling limply to the ground

**Procedures for dealing with students with epilepsy are as follows:**

1. The student must identify themselves to College as having epilepsy
2. The student must register with the Learning Support Service
3. A needs assessment is carried out, specific to the student’s circumstances and the demands of his/her course of study.
4. If any issues emerge, a risk assessment will be carried out to determine strategies to support the student in their course.
5. A Fitness to Continue in Study policy exists to review cases to determine if a student is able to continue in their study. In this context Fitness to Continue in Study refers to the student’s fitness to engage in the full range of College life, including academic and social activities.
6. In the case of epilepsy, the Needs Assessment follows the guidelines of Epilepsy Ireland.

**Relevant Supports & Accommodations**

During a Needs Assessment it is vital to attain the following information so that a complete understanding of the person's epilepsy can be used to identify reasonable accommodations:

* Epilepsy type
* Seizure type/types
* Frequency/pattern
* What exactly happens
* Specific support needs during and after a seizure

**Guidelines for responding to Epilepsy Seizure**

**During a Seizure DON'T:**

* Put anything in the month
* Restrain or restrict movement during the seizure
* Give anything to eat or drink
* Move the person unless they are in danger

**During a Seizure DO:**

* Note the time
* Clear a space around the person
* Cushion the head to prevent head and facial injury
* Remove spectacles, if worn
* Loosen tight neckwear
* Loosen chest and leg safety straps on wheelchair
* Turn on side if possible, to aid drainage
* Reassure others and explain what you are doing

**At the end of a Seizure:**

* Reassure the person and tell them what has happened
* Check for signs of injury and apply first aid if necessary
* Observe the person and stay with them until recovery is complete (they may need assistance to return to their routine)
* Provide privacy and offer assistance if there has been incontinence
* Record appropriately

**Call an Ambulance:**

* If it is the person's first seizure
* If a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes and you do not know the usual length of the person's seizure
* If a seizure lasts 2 minutes more than is usual, and rescue medication isn't prescribed
* If a tonic clonic seizure follows another without full recovery in between, and rescue medication has not been prescribed or been effective
* If concussion/head injury is suspected
* If you are concerned about the person's colour/breathing
* If water is inhaled
* When directed by organisational policy

**Epilepsy Care Plan & Emergency Medicine Protocol**

NCAD have developed a based on information provided by Epilepsy Ireland. The care plans describe the student’s epilepsy and the appropriate first aid. Even if seizures are well controlled staff may need to be informed in case of breakthrough seizures or any impact on memory, learning and behaviour. If a student only has sleep seizures staff still need to know about any effects of disrupted sleep. Information from the care plan may be disclosed with the student’s permission to ensure all parties involved in the students education are aware of the student’s epilepsy and management.

**Epilepsy Care Plan and Emergency Medicine Protocol Form: To be completed by student’s GP/Consultant and returned to NCAD Learning Support Service.**

**Further resources and information**

Epilepsy Ireland, 249 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12.

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