

Sleep deprivation found to trigger initial seizure

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“The research indicates that sleep deprivation is more likely to be a trigger than specifically a cause of a first-ever seizure,” Dr Lawn says. Credit: hipponotized

Neurologists studying WA's first-ever seizure database have established that sleep deprivation is more likely to act as a trigger for people having seizures, rather than a provoked cause of epilepsy.

Royal Perth Hospital neurologist and lead author Dr Nicholas Lawn says it is generally accepted that there is a link between sleep deprivation and seizures but what is unclear is whether seizures occurring during sleep deprivation should be regarded as a provoked cause.

The International League against Epilepsy (ILAE) had documented prior expert knowledge in this area stating: 'they do not define seizures associated with sleep deprivation as provoked'.

Dr Lawn and his research team were able to support and provide statistical evidence for this ILAE rationale.

"[The research] provides support for the concept that a first-ever [seizure](#) occurring in the setting of sleep deprivation should not be considered provoked and management in this situation, including driving advice, should not differ from that provided for patients with a first-ever unprovoked seizure," Dr Lawn says.

When diagnosing a first-ever seizure neurologists look for a provoked cause such as what happened in the patient's life leading up to the seizure.

For instance, an acute metabolic disturbance such as very low glucose or sodium may provoke a seizure.

In this research it was concluded that sleep deprivation is an unprovoked cause of first seizures and had little or no influence on the likelihood of seizure recurrence.

The study included a cohort of more than 1000 patients suffering from sleep deprivation in terms of both partial (50 per cent less sleep) and total sleep deprivation (

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