Fighting Stigma: VA Epilepsy Center of Excellence Releases Video Series

Epilepsy Centers of Excellence (ECoE) has developed a video series titled “Veterans and Epilepsy: Basic Training.” The first video of the series, now available on YouTube (https://youtu.be/R5KIHBCNJhc), focuses on the diagnosis of epilepsy.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (PRWEB) February 21, 2016 -- In an effort to address the stigma of epilepsy and educate Veterans, their caregivers and the general public about living with epilepsy, the Epilepsy Centers of Excellence (ECoE), in partnership with the VHA Employee Education System, have developed a video series titled “Veterans and Epilepsy: Basic Training.” Each video in the series features a Veteran sharing his or her personal experiences and unique challenges balancing the medical, personal and social aspects associated with having recurring seizures. The goal of the video series is to promote public awareness of the impact of epilepsy in the lives of Veterans and to convey that these patients are able to live full, productive, successful lives.

Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, has been labeled the signature injury of the Global War on Terror. According to the Department of Defense, 333,169 U.S. military Servicemembers have been diagnosed with TBI since 2000, and the number is growing. In addition to symptoms such as memory problems, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), U.S. Servicemembers and Veterans with TBI are at greater risk for seizures and epilepsy. To meet the needs of these Veteran patients, VA created the ECoEs, located at 16 sites across the VA health care system and linked to from four regional centers. The ECoEs strive to ensure high-quality care to Veterans with epilepsy by providing clinical care, outreach, research, and education.

“I think receiving a diagnosis of epilepsy is a very emotionally turbulent experience for most of my patients. It is true that they do get some relief from finally having an answer, but the word ‘epilepsy’ has a great stigma attached to it” explains Manu Hegde, MD, PhD, epilepsy specialist and neurologist at the San Francisco VA Medical Center.

“There is a culture of stoicism in the military, which prevents Veterans with epilepsy from reaching out to get more information about their epilepsy. Hopefully these videos will show Veterans and all individuals living with epilepsy they are not alone” explains Stephanie Chen, epilepsy nurse practitioner with the San Francisco VA Medical Center.

The first video of the series, now available on YouTube (https://youtu.be/R5KIHBCNJhc), focuses on the diagnosis of epilepsy. Subsequent videos will be released every few months over the next year and include topics such as, epilepsy medications, social issues faced by individuals living with epilepsy, seizure first aid, and traumatic brain injury.

If you or someone you know is a Veteran with seizures interested in seeking services at one of the Epilepsy Centers of Excellence, please speak with your local primary care provider or neurologist. Your healthcare provider will be able to determine if you might benefit from the services provided by the ECoE and assist you with scheduling an appointment. For more information, please email ECoE(at)va(dot)gov or visit the VA epilepsy website at www.epilepsy.va.gov.
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