

BRINGING EPILEPSY OUT OF THE SHADOWS

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A group of medical professionals is helping create more understanding for this condition.

Epileptics need not suffer alone. In 1999, a group of professionals banded together to form the Philippine League Against Epilepsy (PLAE), a non-profit organization committed to the improvement of the quality of life of persons with epilepsy through education, research, prevention, advocacy, and the deliverance of optimal health care. The organization is an internationally recognized chapter of the International League Against Epilepsy, with a vision of putting regional representation throughout the country very soon.

Epilepsy is the most common serious chronic brain disorder in every country in the world. According to PLAE president, Leonor Cabral-Lim, MD, approximately 50 million people in the world suffer from this condition. In the Philippines alone, an estimated 750,000 people are affected with epilepsy. About 1 out of 3 people with epilepsy develop the symptoms before hitting the age of 25.

"Epilepsy should not handicap anybody. Epileptics should have normal lives. Their situation is basically aggravated by misconceptions and lack of understanding about epilepsy and its treatment which leads to social stigmatization, fear and secrecy among epileptics and their families", Dr. Lim points out.

She says that many epileptics are hindered from accessing effective treatments and are living very restricted lives because of other people's misconceptions about this disorder.

"Our organization (PLAE) would want to see all persons with epilepsy having ready access to an efficient medical referral system to the experts, through collaborative efforts with the Department of Health and other organizations. We want to see the patients able to avail of efficacious and affordable anti-epileptic medications. But most of all, we would like to help protect the rights of the persons with epilepsy through legislations," explains Dr. Lim.

Through proper treatment and support, epileptics can work and play like ordinary normal human being.