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From the editors: Global awareness and International Epilepsy Day

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Epilepsy remains the “black sheep” among neurologic diseases. Numerous reports have emphasized that of various neurologic conditions such as stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy is underrecognized and often poorly funded with regard to clinical care and research. This may be due in part to the ancient nature of epilepsy, with the association of being possessed by demons and spirits. This leads to persistent restrictions in different cultures that stigmatize people with epilepsy over many generations.

An important way to “bring epilepsy out of the shadows” and educate the public about modern concepts that epilepsy is a disease like any other is through awareness. This means taking the opportunity to showcase that people with epilepsy are not much different than anybody else. In fact, most people with epilepsy are successfully treated so that they can lead essentially near normal lives, get married, have children, and participate in modern social and family life. It also is a chance to emphasize that not all people with epilepsy can be treated for their condition and that resources are needed to develop new and better treatment for the 30% or more whose seizures are not controlled with modern medications.

Various efforts have developed over the past decade in different parts of the world to bring awareness about epilepsy to the public. What has been a bit of a debate, however, is whether there should be a single day that celebrates

epilepsy around the world, and if so what is a uniformly acceptable date. The International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) and the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE) have taken up this matter and recently announced the creation of an International Epilepsy Day.

The International Epilepsy Day is the focus of this month’s series with several letters and commentaries on the topic. We start with a letter¹ we received from India suggesting a World Epilepsy Day. This is followed by a response² by the IBE leadership discussing the creation of the International Epilepsy Day, and the process they went through in selecting a day. Thereafter are commentaries from Emilio Perucca as ILAE President,³ leaders of the ILAE regional commissions,^{4–6} and from invited nonprofit organizations.^{7,8}

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