



**EPILEPSY  
FOUNDATION®**  
GEORGIA

*Helping Georgians affected by Seizures*

2625 CUMBERLAND PARKWAY  
SUITE 400  
ATLANTA, GA 30339

Melanie E. Birchfield  
Executive Director  
Epilepsy Foundation of Georgia  
2625 Cumberland Parkway, Suite 400  
Atlanta, GA 30339  
[epilepsyga@mindspring.com](mailto:epilepsyga@mindspring.com)  
[www.epilepsyga.org](http://www.epilepsyga.org)

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak about some of our personal experiences. Epilepsy is a neurological or brain related disorder of unknown cause. It is not a mental illness.

Epilepsy, or seizure disorder as it is often referred to in the community, is more common than you think:

- Everyone in this room has a 1 in 10 chance of having a seizure in their lifetime. Epilepsy knows no boundaries – it crosses every border – nationality, religion and gender. It can affect anyone, anywhere, at any time.
- Epilepsy is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common neurological disorder after stroke and Alzheimer's disease.
- There are as many cases of epilepsy as there are multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy and Parkinson's Disease combined.

Consequently, a much larger audience is affected by this disorder than previously thought.

- 80% of patients with a seizure disorder are well controlled by medication. They have a high quality of life and are very productive in our society.
- However, reaching this point is a matter of trial and error with the medications often trying several before finding the right one or combination of drugs.
- Once this "equilibrium" is found the SLIGHTEST of changes can cause a patient to spiral out of control.
- These changes may be as small as changing a dose size or switching a patient from a brand name product to a generic.

When our foundation started its medication assistance fund several years ago they were, basically, two medications available for treatment: Phenobarbital and Dilantin. The side effects of these drugs were debilitating for many patients.

- Today there are many more choices with fewer side effects.
- However, the cost of these medications has sky rocketed.
- The average monthly cost is \$400 - \$600.
- We have assisted patients whose monthly bills are \$1,700.
- Because we have no permanent source of funding, we are able to help only 50% of those seeking assistance with their medications and they have no other place to go.
- Other medical assistance programs require a 4-6 week waiting period. These medications CANNOT be stopped without serious consequences to the patient.
- In the last few months, when the Medicaid cuts have begun we have seen an increased number of children have increased 3 fold. Previously, our patients were adults.
- Maintaining the correct combination of medications for these children is critical. Multiple seizures can lead to severe development disabilities. Obviously, this affects their ability to lead a normal productive life.

In these days of spiraling health care costs it is much more economical in the long run to allow these patients to maintain their medications and be productive in our society than to increase physician visits and hospital stays due to any changes in their medical care.



(678) 306-1210 • (800) 527-7105 (GA only) • FAX: (678) 306-1211  
[epilepsyga@mindspring.com](mailto:epilepsyga@mindspring.com) • [www.epilepsyga.org](http://www.epilepsyga.org)

An independently incorporated affiliate of the Epilepsy Foundation of America