

W. Curt LaFrance Jr and Steven C. Schachter (Eds)

Gates and Rowan's Nonepileptic Seizures, Fourth Edition

416 p., Hard Cover
Cambridge University Press
EUR 120
ISBN-978-1107110724

W. Curt LaFrance and Steven C. Schachter have come out with the fourth edition of a reference work: *Gates and Rowan's Nonepileptic Seizures*. This has become a classic in the field of neuropsychiatry. The topic of psychogenic nonepileptic seizures (PNES) has fallen into the borderland between neurology and psychiatry, after the dichotomization of neurological and psychiatric practices in the twentieth century, and after the pioneering works of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), now mostly forgotten, in the 19th century at La Salpêtrière in Paris. Seizures may be epileptic, psychogenic nonepileptic, or physiological nonepileptic. Establishing the diagnosis is essential, as it informs different treatments. In 38 chapters, intentionally short and concise, the various specialists carefully selected by the editors for their well-known expertise, cover all aspects of this typical example of a pathology that falls into the neurological as well as the psychiatric category.

After a chapter describing the epidemiology and prevalence (20–50% of patients in a reference centre for epileptology, 30% of patients sent in to be assessed for pharmacoresistant epilepsy), the chapter on the history of PNES, written by Michael R. Trimble, is concise and yet does not fail to address the many aspects of a pathology known for more than three millennia. The only shortcoming is that while the seminal works of Charcot and Pierre Janet (1845–1947) are well analysed, the precursor concepts developed by Paul Sollier (1861–1933) are, as is too often the case, missing from the survey of neurological research conducted in Paris at the end of the 19th century.

The frequent delay in diagnosing PNES is not only detrimental to patients; it considerably increases the costs of medical care, especially because of explorations that are both inadequate and unnecessarily repeated, as James C. Hamilton et al. demonstrate in their chapter entitled: “Cost and burdens of PNES in context”.

Next, Selim R. Benbadis and W. Curt LaFrance explore all elements of clinical semiology, highlighting “red flags” to be aware of in making the right diagnosis. To make this diagnosis, video EEG monitoring is now the key decision-making tool. Co-exis-

tent real epilepsy and PNES is frequent and attests to the durability of Charcot's concept of hystero-epilepsy. All of the differential diagnoses for PNES are covered accurately and in detail in different chapters, especially in the case of cardiac and somnogenic causes.

The most original chapters, and those that, once again, draw on 19th century sources, are those that describe the relevance of hypnosis and linguistic analysis in the responses to medical interviews used as diagnostic tools for PNES. Neurologists treating adults are not alone in their interest in PNES. The geriatrician and the paediatrician share in equal measure their diagnostic and therapeutic questions, and this clearly shows that PNES is a pathology that occurs from the earliest childhood through to the end of life.

To show this work's exhaustive treatment of every facet of PNES, we can cite the chapters on the cultural aspects of this condition in various countries worldwide, the chapter on the validity of personality tests, or that on medical-legal aspects. One chapter is given over to the current interest in the health-related quality of life for patients. With honesty and modesty, it discusses the very real difficulty of assessing the quality of life and the tools currently available for understanding it.

While many works confirm the primordial role of psychological conditions in causing PNES, the brief chapter including the testimony of adolescents and their parents on their PNES offers original insights. It highlights the importance of self-esteem, of which the return, the rebirth, or even the resurrection appears to be the essential therapeutic objective.

W. Curt LaFrance and Mark Zimmerman then discuss the changes inaugurated by the fifth edition of the DSM. From this new edition, they have developed a decision tree that is useful and practical for all neurology clinicians, family doctors and emergency physicians. Comorbidities are also reviewed along with the various ways other diseases can interlink with PNES.

Ten chapters then go on to comprehensively discuss all facets of the multiple methods of individual and family treatment from the point of view of the epileptologist as well as that of the psychiatrists, the psychologists or social workers. Coordinating the various approaches to PNES by these different specialists is essential to successfully treating this complex pathology. One conclusion is that the treatment of PNES is an accurate marker of the quality of care.

At the end of the book, a long chapter recapitulates all of the efforts made in biological fields and through various brain imaging techniques, to improve our understanding of the pathophysiology of PNES. It bears mentioning that we are still laying the foundations and that no scientifically demonstrated conclusion is entire-

ly relevant at this stage. However, the insula seems to play a central role, acting as an interface between the emotional system and sensorimotor areas. It also appears that the inappropriate activation of the default mode network is involved. The vast field of research that remains to explore makes it possible to predict that the fourth edition of this book will not be the last.

One is tempted to call this the PNES bible, made accessible by its comprehensive index. It belongs in every centre treating epileptics and complements the book published by the American Academy of Neurology in 2006 [1]. One disappointment is the near-total absence of iconography, which could have enriched and balanced this very dense work.

Disclosure Statement

The author reports no disclosures relevant to the manuscript.

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Reference

- 1 Hallett M, Fahn S, Jankovic J, Lang AE, Cloninger CR, Yudofsky SC (eds): Psychogenic Movement Disorders. Neurology and Neuropsychiatry. Philadelphia, AAN Press, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2006.