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Authors

Mathern, GW

Nehlig, A

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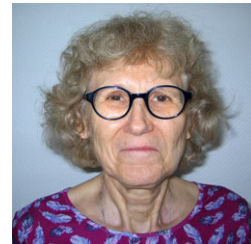


From the Editors: Using consciousness to describe seizures and classify the epilepsies

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Gary Mathern, *Epilepsia* Co-Editor in Chief



Astrid Nehlig, *Epilepsia* Co-Editor in Chief

Despite hundreds, if not thousands, of years of careful observation and documentation, as clinicians we still struggle to find accurate terminology for describing seizures and classifying types of epilepsy that is simple to use and universally applicable and acceptable. That struggle is no better exemplified than in describing alterations of consciousness that are associated with epileptic seizures. Prior International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) classification systems used altered awareness to describe focal seizures that distinguished between partial and complex partial events. In the 2010 reorganization of the epilepsies, it was decided that determining consciousness was easy and practical, and seizures were dichotomized as generalized or focal. That change led to a significant amount of “howling” among our readership.

This issue of *Epilepsia* presents a Controversy in Epilepsy series to address if consciousness should be used as a feature in classifying seizures and epilepsy. The series starts with an article by Luders et al., who take the provocative position that not only should alterations of consciousness be considered, but that there are five distinct types that can be accurately described for classification. Blumenfeld and Meador provide a counter position, explaining that describing levels of awareness is not so simple. They indicate that there are insufficient data to support the distinction of five levels of consciousness, and that the proposed terms for these five levels are confusing. These two positions are fol-

lowed by separate commentaries by Robert Fisher and Samuel Wiebe that provide additional scholarly views on the topic.

As part of this series, the Editors at *Epilepsia* would like to get your opinion about using consciousness in describing and possibly classifying seizures. Please go to <http://surveys.verticalresponse.com/a/show/1539433/f0048e6d2a/0> and complete the electronic poll, which includes the questions below. We will report the results of the poll in future editions of *Epilepsia*. Should you have ideas for our Controversy in Epilepsy series, please contact the editors at epilepsia@epilepsia.com.

The 2010 ILAE organization of the epilepsies classified seizures as focal or generalized without considering alterations of consciousness. In your opinion:

- 1 Seizures should be described as focal or generalized without considering consciousness (current ILAE recommendation)
- 2 Focal and generalized seizures should include alteration of consciousness in describing the events
- 3 Only focal seizures should include alteration of consciousness in describing the events

Focal seizures with altered awareness and amnesia should be termed:

- 1 Focal dyscognitive seizures
- 2 Complex partial seizures
- 3 Focal impaired consciousness seizures (FICS)
- 4 Any of the above

Gary W. Mathern
Co-Editor in Chief, *Epilepsia*
Astrid Nehlig
Co-Editor in Chief, *Epilepsia*