

Drama or reality TV: Do medical shows depict proper first aid for seizures?

February 14 2010

Watching TV medical shows might not be the best way to learn what to do when someone has a seizure. Researchers screened the most popular medical dramas and found that doctors and nurses on the shows responded inappropriately to seizures almost half the time, according to a study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 62nd Annual Meeting in Toronto April 10 to April 17, 2010.

"Television dramas are a potentially powerful method of educating the public about first aid and seizures," said study author Andrew Moeller, with Dalhousie University, Halifax, in Nova Scotia, Canada. "Our results, showing that television shows inaccurately showed [seizure](#) management half the time, are a call to action. People with epilepsy should lobby the television industry to adhere to guidelines for first aid management of seizures." Moeller worked alongside R. Mark Sadler, MD, also with Dalhousie University for the research.

For the study, researchers screened all episodes of the highest-rated US medical dramas: "Grey's Anatomy," "House, M.D.," and "Private Practice" and the last five seasons of "ER" for seizures. In the 327 episodes, 59 seizures occurred. Fifty-one seizures took place in a hospital. Nearly all first aid was performed by "nurses" or "doctors."

Guidelines on seizure management were used to determine whether the seizure was handled properly.

The study found that inappropriate practices, including holding the person down, trying to stop involuntary movements or putting something in the person's mouth, occurred in 25 cases, nearly 46 percent of the time. First aid management was shown appropriately in 17 seizures, or about 29 percent of the time. Appropriateness of first aid could not be determined in 15 incidents of seizures, or 25 percent.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

Citation: Drama or reality TV: Do medical shows depict proper first aid for seizures? (2010, February 14) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-02-drama-reality-tv-medical-depict.html>

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