

Few operations for epilepsy despite their safety and efficacy

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A study at University of Gothenburg has found that epilepsy surgery is a safe, effective and low-risk procedure. Credit: University of Gothenburg.

A study at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, has found that epilepsy surgery is a safe, effective and low-risk procedure. Nevertheless, few Swedes have the operation, and those who are interested may have to wait a long time for presurgical counseling.

The study at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, was based on the Swedish National Epilepsy Surgery Register, which includes all cases since 1990. The researchers reviewed data for the 865 patients who were operated on at Sweden's six epilepsy surgery clinics from 1996 to 2010.

The purpose of surgery is to enable a person with severe epilepsy to be free of seizures or to reduce their frequency to the point that (s)he can enjoy better quality of life.

Downward trend

Only 3% (25) of the patients suffered lasting complications. A comparison with a previous study showed that the complication rate had trended downward.

The Gothenburg study is one of many that have demonstrated the safety and efficacy of epilepsy surgery. A long-term follow-up study in 2013 based on the Swedish National Epilepsy Surgery Register found that more than 60% of adults were free of seizures 5-10 years after surgery.

20 year waiting line

Despite the encouraging data, only 50-60 procedures are performed in Sweden every year. Studies show that it takes an average of 20 years for a patient with treatment-resistant epilepsy to be referred for presurgical counseling.

"One possible reason that it takes so long is that doctors may erroneously believe that surgery is a high-risk procedure," says Johan Bjellvi, a researcher at Sahlgrenska Academy. "Our study has made an important contribution by demonstrating that the risk of complications is very

low."

Another problem is that many patients do not even know that surgery is an option.

Raise awareness

The Gothenburg epilepsy surgery team is participating in an EU project to raise awareness and increase the availability of these procedures throughout Europe. One goal is to develop a new classification system for complications of epilepsy surgery.

"If we are going to further minimize the risk of operating, the potential adverse effects must be described in a uniform manner," Dr. Bjellvi says. "The EU project is designing a website for use by both doctors and [patients](#) in 17 countries."

More information: The article Complications of Epilepsy Surgery in Sweden 1996-2010: a Prospective, Population-based Study was published online by the *Journal of Neurosurgery* in October.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25361484

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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