

# Non-epileptic seizure patients getting 'lost in system'

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About 2,000 patients in Saskatchewan and 72,000 across Canada experience seizure-like episodes unrelated to epilepsy, but nearly half

aren't receiving followup care, harming their quality of life and driving up health-care costs even after their complex medical condition is properly diagnosed.

That's the conclusion of a research paper published today in *Seizure: European Journal of Epilepsy* by an international group of researchers led by University of Saskatchewan (U of S) neurologist Jose Téllez-Zenteno and five other U of S researchers.

Even though Canada's medical system is well-equipped to diagnose psychogenic non-epileptic seizures (PNES), the condition is misdiagnosed about 40 per cent of the time as epilepsy.

PNES [patients](#)' symptoms may include convulsions, altered mental status and behaviour, or unconsciousness, but long-term monitoring of their brain electrical activity shows no change during a [seizure](#), unlike with epilepsy.

"The big problem is, it looks like [epilepsy](#) and patients are being inappropriately treated for seizures. Those medications have side-effects. Patients can come into emergency in distress, not respond to medication and end up in intensive care, intubated and treated for seizures that aren't stopping," said neurologist Alexandra Carter, lead author of the paper.

**More information:** Alexandra Carter et al. Experience of psychogenic nonepileptic seizures in the Canadian league against epilepsy: A survey describing current practices by neurologists and epileptologists, *Seizure* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.seizure.2018.08.025](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seizure.2018.08.025)

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