Epilepsy discrimination still rife

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People with epilepsy continue to face high rates of stigma and discrimination, particularly in the workplace, according to Flinders University disability expert Dr Michelle Bellon.

Dr Bellon said the effects of discrimination were far-reaching and could even exacerbate epilepsy.

"Stigma and discrimination can lead to stress and when people with epilepsy have high stress levels they become more susceptible to seizures," she said.

"This could then cause a flow on effect to other health problems, such as depression and anxiety, which further reduce the level of independence, power and control of people with epilepsy, both in the workplace and the wider community."

"Access to appropriate support groups and improved awareness of how people can protect themselves in situations of unfair treatment should be prioritised to minimise the harmful effects of stigma and discrimination in the community."

The findings, Dr Bellon said, highlighted the need for more community education and awareness.

"People assume they know what epilepsy is but it's very individualised so we really need to be promoting epilepsy education a lot better than what we're currently doing. In addition, people with epilepsy also need further support to develop skills in self-advocacy.

The "E" word: Epilepsy and per … Longitudinal Survey has recently been published in the international journal Epilepsy and Behaviour.

Provided by Flinders University