

Berg AT, Vickrey BG, Testa FM, Levy SR, Shinnar S, DiMario F. **Behavior and social competency in children with idiopathic and cryptogenic epilepsy.** Dev Med Child Neurol (in press).

**ABSTRACT:**

**Background:** Behavioral and related disorders are frequently reported in association with childhood epilepsy. Reasons for this are unclear.

**Methods:** In a prospective community-based study of newly diagnosed childhood epilepsy, behavioral assessments (Child Behavior Checklist) were performed 8 to 9 years after initial diagnosis of epilepsy to determine the impact of remission and medication status on behavioral problems. Children with epilepsy were also compared to sibling controls.

**Results:** 226 children (8-17 years old, 108 girls) with idiopathic or cryptogenic epilepsy were included in the analyses. 128 matched pairs were included in analyses of case-sibling differences.

Lack of remission and current medication use were associated with worse behavioral problem and competency scores. Lack of remission generally had a greater effect than medication use except for attention problems; medication status had the more deleterious effect ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Children with epilepsy had significantly worse behavioral problem and competency scores relative to sibling controls. Even in pairs for which the case was seizure-free and off medication, significant case-sibling differences persisted for most scales ( $p = 0.05$  to  $p = 0.001$ ).

**Interpretation:** Lack of remission and continued antiepileptic medication use negatively influence behavioral problems in children with epilepsy but do not fully explain the worse scores relative to siblings. This suggests an independent effect associated with the epilepsy itself.