**Epilepsy Syndromes of Childhood & Adolescence**

**Landau Kleffner Syndrome: Acquired Epileptic Aphasia in Childhood**

In children who develop this syndrome, the first signs usually appear somewhere between the ages of three and seven. Its onset may be abrupt or gradual. Up to the time when Landau Kleffner Syndrome is diagnosed, the children have shown normal development.

The cause of this syndrome is not known. It may be that in some children the brain has not developed fully. In others, the problem may have been precipitated by a viral infection. It is a syndrome which affects twice as many boys as girls.

**Symptoms**

The first sign of a problem appears in the child’s speech and language development. They have difficulty with communicating. They show not only difficulty understanding what is said to them (due to auditory agnosia) but also have difficulty in putting their thoughts in to words (an expressive dysphasia). Other aspects of learning are probably not affected. The aphasia, of very variable severity can be protracted for many years with intermittent recovery and recurrences.

Generally few or sometimes no major seizures are seen. The visible seizures seen in this syndrome are usually easy to treat. Seizures will appear in about 75% of these children, certainly within a few weeks of the first sign of the language difficulty.

**Diagnosis**

The EEG (electroencephalogram) test which records the ongoing electrical activity in the brain, will show signs of a brain malfunction involving both cerebral hemispheres (both sides of the brain), but usually the spike and wave activity seen on the EEG will be more prominent in that part of the brain which deals with language function. For most people, this will be on the left side.

Special investigations looking at the body’s metabolism and scanning of the brain are usually all quite normal. At times, signs of a recent viral infection may be shown.

**Treatment**

Most children in the early stages will need treatment with anti-epileptic drugs for the partial seizures. There are reports that steroid treatment and some other drugs may help recovery. In children where there are persisting seizures associated with persisting language difficulties, surgery has been shown to help. However, this treatment requires to be preceded by a very careful selection process. In this operation, the group of nerve cells which are showing most signs of malfunction are isolated from the rest of the brain by a process known as subpial transection.

A careful assessment of a child’s educational strengths and weaknesses is just as important as medical treatment so that appropriate help at school can be found. If a child is supported in this way, the chances of them becoming frustrated and confused and showing behavioural difficulty will be reduced.

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**Joint Epilepsy Council** For the United Kingdom & Ireland  
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PROGNOSIS

The long term outlook for most children with this condition is good for the seizures. In the vast majority, the seizures will disappear fairly soon. In half the children, the language difficulties will disappear fairly soon. In the remaining half, some improvement will occur in time. In perhaps 20% (one in five) the children will keep their language difficulties.