

Accelerated Forgetting in Association with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy and Paraneoplastic Encephalitis

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The association between epilepsy and amnesia is studied in patient J.T. who presented with a very unusual pattern of memory loss with retention of information for hours to days but rapid forgetting of information that exceeded this time frame. J.T.'s unusual memory profile was studied with several tests administered over week-long intervals of time. There was evidence that his retention decreased in conjunction with increased seizures. During a trial of paraldehyde, a decrease in seizure frequency was associated with enhanced memory. J.T.'s memory problem was unlike that described in prototypical cases of amnesia. His day-long retention of new information alongside his absolute loss of that information days later is consistent with the idea that consolidation is a process that occurs over lengthy periods of time. © 1997 Academic Press

Studies of amnesic patients have underscored the critical role of medial temporal brain regions for new learning (Milner, 1966; Scoville & Milner, 1957). Temporal lobe lesions and temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) are often associated with memory deficits (Gallassi, Morreale, Lorusso, Pazzaglia, & Lugaresi, 1988). TLE-based memory problems could occur as a consequence of decreased hippocampal volume (Rausch & Babb, 1993; Sagar & Oxbury, 1986), static lesions in the medial temporal lobe (Kuzniecky et al., 1987), and/or phasic disruption of medial temporal lobe activity (Jefferys & Williams, 1987; Mellanby, 1986). Despite general acceptance of an association between TLE and memory impairment, there is no consensus as to the extent

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