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NOTE TO EDITORS:

*This survey was conducted at the suggestion of two staff physicians of the Neurological Institute, Presbyterian Hospital, New York, N. Y. and the findings were presented in a paper at one of the sessions of the American Neurological Association convention last month.*

# MORE ENLIGHTENED PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD EPILEPSY FOUND TODAY IN SURVEY

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**P**RINCETON, N.J., July 8 -- Many doctors are gratified by the more enlightened attitude shown by the public today toward health problems. This applies particularly to the ancient and baffling disease called epilepsy.

Because of the dramatic nature of the seizures or fits in epileptics, people for centuries believed that the victims of the disease were "possessed of devils," that the gods actually took hold of a person and shook him (hence the term "seizure"), or that epilepsy was a form of insanity.



A nationwide survey of attitudes toward epilepsy shows that comparatively few persons cling today to such unfounded notions. The average American gives a reasonably intelligent answer when questioned about the possible causes of the epileptic condition.

A substantial majority of persons who know what epilepsy is, and of those who have seen a seizure, say they would not object to having their children at school or at play associate with a person who sometimes had seizures.

Asked whether epileptics should be employed in jobs

like other people, the voters in the survey showed a close division of opinion, with a slight margin in favor.

The survey was conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion at the suggestion of two members of the staff of the Neurological Institute of Presbyterian Hospital, New York. The findings were presented at a meeting last month of the American League Against Epilepsy which was held in conjunction with the American Neurological Association annual convention in Atlantic City.

**Public Knowledge of Epilepsy**

The survey found that nine out of every ten adults questioned (92 per cent) had heard of epilepsy, that 57 per cent know or had known someone with epilepsy, and that 56 per cent had seen a

seizure or fit.

The poll then asked:

*"Would you object to having any of your children in school, or at play, associate with persons who sometimes had seizures?"*

The vote:

Yes, would object . . .	24%
No, would not . . . . .	57
No opinion . . . . .	11
	<u>92%</u>

Not familiar with epilepsy. . . . .	8
	<u>100%</u>

Those persons in the sample who said they had seen someone having an epileptic fit indicated by a substantial majority that they would not object to having a child associate with an epileptic.

The next question was:

*"Do you think epileptics should or should not be employed in jobs like other people?"*

Yes, should. . . . .	45%
No, should not . . . . .	35
No opinion . . . . .	12
	<u>92%</u>

Not familiar with epilepsy . . . . .	8
	<u>100%</u>

People who know an epileptic and have seen a seizure took a more tolerant attitude, 54 per cent saying that there should be no job discrimination against

epileptics, while 37 per cent said they should not be employed like other people, and 9 per cent expressed no opinion.

Many business firms refuse to hire epileptics. One of the objectives of the League Against Epilepsy is to overcome this discrimination in cases where the seizures are kept under control by modern therapy.

**Not Insanity**

Voters were then asked:

*"Do you think epilepsy is a form of insanity, or not?"*

Yes. . . . .	13%
No . . . . .	59
No opinion . . . . .	20
	<u>92%</u>

Not familiar with epilepsy . . . . .	8
	<u>100%</u>

Further evidence of public enlightenment is reflected in answers to the question, "What do you think is the cause of epilepsy?"

One half (49 per cent) said they don't know, and the rest of those familiar with epilepsy (43 per cent) gave answers which doctors would call intelligent (nervous disease, inherited trait, brain tumor, injury, etc.) except for a very small group of persons who named such things as change of the moon, mis-mating, eating raw peanuts, and sin.