

## Attitudes of teachers towards epilepsy and their relation with knowledge and beliefs

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**Introduction:** This study aims to evaluate the adequate knowledge and beliefs about epilepsy and association with different models of attitudes described by teachers towards students with epilepsy. Epilepsy is a chronic neurological disease that affects 1% of the population and about 50% of the cases are diagnosed in children. This condition is marked by stigma that affect the psychological, physical, social and schooling areas, revealing difficulties from childhood to adulthood. Identifying the influences and patterns of teachers' behavior in the face of epileptic seizures can help us design actions to reduce stigma.

**Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among public school teachers from 10 different schools in São Paulo State between May 2017 and November 2017. A self-report questionnaire with multiple choice and dissertations answers was given anonymously to each teacher and answered in the researcher presence. The questionnaire was focused on asking for information regarding the following areas: teachers' demographic information, knowledge about epilepsy, attitudes towards epilepsy and perceptions regarding this condition. The questionnaires were home designed after a deep review literature and developed following a standard process for elaboration and validation. The Qui-Square test was used to assess association between attitude and knowledge/belief and the p. value less than 0.05 was set as significant.

**Results:** A total of 135 teachers from the public school system participated in this study (average of 43 years old and 75% female). Most teachers (72%) had more than 10 years of experience and more than half gave classes in Elementary School and High School. Overall, 52% of the participants demonstrated misconceptions about the scientific knowledge about epilepsy and 39% showed inadequate beliefs about this disease. Among them, 88% had heard about epilepsy, 24% had students with epilepsy and only 4% had some course about this topic. We found that teachers who demonstrated correct levels of knowledge about the causes and symptoms of epilepsy tend to have more appropriate attitudes towards students with epilepsy ( $p=0,01$ ). The same is true for participants who have demonstrated adequate beliefs about epilepsy ( $p=0,003$ ). However, a level of statistical significance was not found among participants who presented lack of knowledge ( $p=0,1$ ) and beliefs ( $p=0,67$ ) about epilepsy and their attitudes towards students with epilepsy.

**Discussion:** The results found on the low level of knowledge of teachers about epilepsy corroborate with the literature, but different from other studies, the present study reveals qualitative data regarding the type of attitude of the participants in moments of epileptic seizure during classes, demonstrating that attitudes in the assistance during an epileptic seizure are associated with the level of scientific knowledge about this disease. Meanwhile, teachers' inadequate attitudes during students' seizures may be related not only to the level of knowledge and beliefs on the subject, but to other psychological and cognitive variables that control human behavior, such as levels of mental health, initiative, flexibility, empathy and own experience with epilepsy in other contexts.

**Conclusion:** The present work confirms the relevance of the health area being closer to education, especially with the new reality of school inclusion. Many health issues are present in the school routine, especially neurological conditions that impact students' social learning and social interaction.