

# Epilepsy Monitoring Unit



UHN

## Information For Patients and Their Families

### **Epilepsy Program**

Krembil Neuroscience Program  
Toronto Western Hospital  
University Health Network

Welcome to the Toronto Western Hospital, University Health Network **Epilepsy Monitoring Unit (EMU)**.

This pamphlet will give you information about the EMU and what to expect when you are admitted to this unit. If you have questions please ask your doctor, the nurse practitioner or staff nurses for more information.

### **Seizure/Epilepsy**

A seizure is an abnormal electrical discharge involving part or all of the brain, which changes a person physically or changes their behaviour. **Epilepsy** is repeated seizures.

### **The Epilepsy Monitoring Unit - General Information**

The EMU is located on the neurology ward at the Toronto Western Hospital (Bathurst and Dundas St.). It is a five-bed mixed gender unit and is specially designed for 24 hour monitoring of patients' seizures. A nurse will be in the room at all times.

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Page 1 of 3

Together we can learn more about your epilepsy by using:

1. a video camera (to record seizures);
2. electroencephalography (EEG) monitoring (to measure electrical activity of the brain, especially during seizures).

These tests may show the area of the brain responsible for your seizures. The test results are used to guide the best possible treatment plan for you.

### **Admission to hospital**

On the day of admission to hospital please arrive at the Toronto Western Hospital Admitting Department on the first floor.

### **While on the Neurology ward (5B Fell) you will be seen by:**

- A **staff nurse**, who will orient you to your room and the unit, and interview you for admission.
- The **Advanced Practice Nurse (nurse practitioner)**, who will ask you about your medical history, do a physical and neurological examination, decrease your seizure medications to record seizures and talk to you about the plan for your care with **the epileptologist (the neurologist who specializes in epilepsy)**.
- An **EEG technologist**, who will attach small metal disks (electrodes) to your scalp with a special gel and cream, and wrap your head with a gauze bandage. These electrodes will monitor your brain waves during your stay in the EMU. The technologist will explain the audio/video recording procedure used to collect data.

You will be asked to push a button if you feel a seizure starting. This will send a signal for EEG recording on the computer and also alert staff nurses during your seizures.

### **During your stay in the EMU:**

- You will spend most of the time in bed or in a comfortable chair. You will need to stay in the EMU area to record seizures and for your safety. Your stay will last a few days to a few weeks, until enough seizures are recorded.
- Every morning your electrodes will be checked and gel reapplied.
- You may take a shower every day. Nurses will cover your electrodes and head wrapping .
- Nurses have primary responsibility for your daily care. They will immediately respond to your needs through regular checks, response to your call bell, or by seeing you through a monitor.
- You will be seen daily by the nurse practitioner and/or the epileptologist, who will manage your care and make changes to your medications as needed.
- Your seizure medications may be decreased or stopped to increase the chance of recording a seizure.

### **Other Tests:**

**Neuropsychological tests** of memory and language may also be done by the Neuropsychology Department. These tests will take about 5-7 hours, and will help to find the source of your seizures.

You may have **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)** to take pictures of the brain (done before or after discharge, if not done before EMU admission).

### **Discharge from the EMU**

When enough seizures are recorded, your medications will be restarted and the EEG recording stopped. A follow-up appointment will be made in the Epilepsy Clinic with the neurologist to talk about all findings and plans. If your seizures can be helped by surgery, you will have all the necessary tests done and you will have an appointment with a neurosurgeon specializing in epilepsy surgery.

### **Tips from our patients**

- \* Consider a short hairstyle to make applying and removing the electrodes and gel easy. Before admission, please shampoo your hair, and do not put on any hair gel/cream. If you have braids, please remove them.
- \* Electrode gel may rarely cause temporary hair loss.
- \* **Bring:**
  - Own medications in their original bottles in order to know the exact dose. The hospital will provide most medications during your hospital stay.
  - Toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, slippers, housecoat and shampoo/conditioner, and comb/brush to use when electrodes are removed before discharge from hospital.
  - Comfortable loose-fitting clothing that buttons up the front. Remember, the amount of time you stay in the hospital depends on how many seizures we need to record. Therefore, your time in the hospital varies.
  - Hospital and health card, phone calling card and a small amount of cash to pay for TV and phone services.
  - Books, magazines, crafts, snacks, and tape/CD player with headphones.