

Inside TSA

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A Serious Look at How Tourette Syndrome is Diagnosed



The process of diagnosing Tourette Syndrome has changed dramatically in the years since TSA was established and began its efforts to increase awareness of TS symptoms among medical professionals and the general public. We've brought together four renowned experts for a "virtual roundtable" to examine the subject of diagnosing TS from different perspectives. The participants include: Cheston Berlin, M.D., University Professor of Pediatrics, The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center; Cathy Budman, M.D., Associate Professor of Psychiatry & Neurology, North Shore University, Long Island Jewish Health System and Director of the Movement Disorder Center in Psychiatry; Peter Hollenbeck, Ph.D., Purdue University Professor of Biological Science; and Jeremiah Scharf, M.D., Ph.D., Massachusetts General Hospital — Harvard

Medical School, Psychiatric Neurodevelopmental Genetics Unit.

What does a physician look for when determining a diagnosis of TS?



Dr. Budman: The diagnostic criteria for Tourette Syndrome as currently established by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Edition, Text Revision requires that both multiple motor and vocal tics be present for a period of time—although not necessarily concurrently, and also that symptoms have to have begun before the age of 18.

Physicians ask about when they can observe the movements and try to learn whether the tics experienced are sudden, rapid, non-rhythmic, recurrent stereotypic movement and/or include vocalizations. Tics typically occur in bouts that are nearly every day or intermittently throughout a period of at least one year or more. A diagnosis requires

that the person be without any tic-free intervals for more than three consecutive months. Also, it needs to be assessed whether these symptoms cause distress or significant impairment, and that they cannot be attributed to another underlying physiological problem. Often these tics will be manifested in one area of the body (usually the face or head), will wax and wane in severity and even appear in different parts of the body.



Dr. Scharf: One really important thing to determine is whether a symptom is actually a tic. One feature that provides a clue that we're dealing with a tic disorder is to ask about premonitory sensations—an itch, an urge, a certain tension felt somewhere in the body that is experienced just before the onset of the tic. The reported presence of these

continued on page 8...

Luxury Car Sweepstakes Winner!

TSA is happy to congratulate Richard Sieradzki of Petoskey, Michigan, the proud owner of a brand new Mercedes C300 Sedan. The next TSA Car Sweepstakes will be held on February 22, 2010. For more information about this opportunity to win a car, contact Susan Cimini in the Development Office at ext. 223.