

ASK THE MAB

(Medical Advisory Board)

Cheston M. Berlin, Jr., M.D., University Professor of Pediatrics, The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center (Pediatrics)

My husband was diagnosed with TS when he was a child. Recently, he has started jerking his head and neck while asleep. Is it possible for someone to tic while sleeping?

Many people jerk during sleep, especially when falling asleep or shortly before arousal. These movements are called myoclonic jerks. Tics have been noted during sleep; the frequency and intensity are usually less than when the person is awake. The incidence of tics has been reported to be between 3% and 14%. Often, it is difficult to differentiate in the general population tics from myoclonic jerks. Also, patients may be unaware that they have tics during sleep.

I have an 8-year-old son with TS. He has also been diagnosed as having Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD) and is speech delayed. In addition, he screams uncontrollably all day long. Is this part of his TS symptoms, and if so, which medication is best to reduce these outbursts?

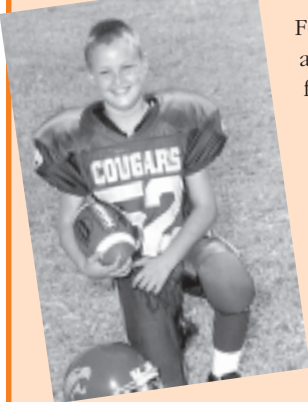
TS has been recognized in patients who also have a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder which includes autism, Asperger's syndrome and pervasive develop-

mental disorder (PDD). This association may be more frequent than previously thought. It is more difficult to tease out which disorder might be responsible for causing the symptoms you describe. Screaming is sometimes seen in patients without a tic disorder and is considered to be part of the picture of autistic spectrum disorders. Risperidol is a medication that has been helpful in reducing such outbursts.

Recently, my 10-year-old daughter was diagnosed with TS. Her neurologist did not prescribe medication because her case is mild. However, suddenly her symptoms worsened. Should we consult with our doctor about starting medication, or will these tics go away just the way they appeared?

It is important to understand that tics may wax and wane with no discernible relation to life events. A consultation is always recommended when there is a significant change in the intensity of symptoms. The increase may not be enough to warrant the starting of medication, but it is important for your doctor to be aware of the change and a possible pattern that may be connected to stress, school, or a physical activity.

TEEN HERO TO THE RESCUE



Fourteen-year-old Justin Gregorich may not be the biggest and strongest boy going out for Countryside's junior varsity football team, but he is a hero. Justin left football practice early, after being teased about not lifting as much weight as the other guys. On his way home he saw a car veer off the road, flatten a sign and rocket directly through a chain-linked fence and into a retention pond.

Justin ripped off his knapsack and dove in to help rescue the eighty-year-old driver. The water was only sixty-two degrees and Justin didn't think about the alligators and snakes in the pond or his TS. He just dove in and helped pull the driver from the sinking car to safety.

"Nothing went through my head except that I had to save that man, so I took my shoes off so as not to be weighed down, and dove right in. I didn't even think about what I was doing," Justin described what happened.

The paramedics were impressed, but Justin's coach and mother weren't surprised because Justin really is a hero.

Paige Vickery (continued from page 3)

might take an extra dose in the middle of the day, get a little groggy but feel rested and OK when I'm on the podium. I choose not to take a lot of medications, but I do take them.

TSA: Did TS ever prevent you from getting a specific conducting job?

P.V.: The only time I recall was when I was being considered to conduct an All State Youth Orchestra and a bass player said, "Do we really want to expose our children to this?" That was devastating. He'd never even seen my work. Since then, youth orchestras have become my niche.

In Boulder I had an orchestra with three autistic children. It took patience and understanding from the other kids around them. I told the board that they can't deny those kids—and the kids around them—the opportunity to learn about acceptance.

There are more difficulties with being a woman conductor getting posts in orchestras—there's an old school mentality. Of course there's also the positives of not blending in with all those faceless tuxedos. I'm unique.

TSA: TS is in the media a great deal lately. Some of the presentations are more realistic and more positive than others. What do you think of the role of the media in increasing awareness?

P.V.: They associate it so much with verbal tics and I think that we need to start realizing that a smaller percentage of people with TS have vocalizations. My problem is about pigeonholing TS.

TSA: Do you have any last words for kids with TS and their parents?

P.V.: I don't want to diminish what anyone goes through, but I've found that obstacles you overcome—with hard work and heartache—help you develop skills of equal value. As you stretch one way, you stretch the other way too in empathy, an increased sense of humanity and what is possible. Try hanging your hat on what you are achieving. Because you are overcoming what most people never have to tackle, it can make you a better human being.

If You Are Moving . . . or are receiving duplicate copies of this Newsletter—please let us know so that we can update our mailing list. To update, we need both your old and new addresses.

