23 March 2016

Get involved and go purple for epilepsy awareness

Look around the office, the classroom or the gym and chances are you know someone who quietly suffers from epilepsy.

One in 25 Australians has the disease, yet many keep it hidden due to stigma and discrimination.

March is epilepsy awareness month and on 26 March (Purple Day), people from around the globe are asked to talk about epilepsy, and those who live with seizures are reminded they are not alone.

Sunshine Coast and Hospital Health Service Neurologist, Dr Tomin Mooney, said epilepsy was a common brain disorder which took the form of recurring seizures.

“Epilepsy is not just one condition; it is a diverse family of disorders comprising many seizure types,” Dr Mooney said.

“To say a person has epilepsy simply means that a person has shown a tendency to have recurring seizures. Therefore, when a person has a single seizure this does not necessarily mean that they have epilepsy. There are seizures that are not epileptic such as those that result from diabetes, kinked blood vessels and a range of other health conditions.

“Epilepsy can develop at any age, and has no age, racial, social class, national or geographical boundaries. I would like to encourage those living with epilepsy that they are not alone, and that it is a common condition,” he said.

Dr Mooney said if someone is having a seizure, do not restrain their movements, do not force anything into their mouth, and do not give them water, pills or food until they are fully alert.

“Call an ambulance by dialling 000 immediately if the seizure activity lasts five or more minutes, if a second seizure follows quickly, if the person remains non-responsive for more than five minutes after the seizure stops, or if the person is injured, pregnant or has swallowed water,” Dr Mooney said.

Purple Day was founded in 2008 by a young Canadian girl called Cassidy Megan, and it has since become a global campaign dedicated to increasing epilepsy awareness worldwide.

For more information visit www.epilepsyqueensland.com.au
DID YOU KNOW?

• 10 per cent of Australians will have a seizure during their lifetime, while three to four per cent will be diagnosed with epilepsy.
• Epilepsy is the world’s most common serious brain disorder.
• Anyone at any age can be diagnosed with epilepsy.
• The majority of people first diagnosed with epilepsy are school aged or over 55.
• There are many different types of epilepsy and associated seizures.
• Stigma, discrimination and misconceptions associated with epilepsy are sometimes worse than the condition itself.

ENDS

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