



## High Prevalence of Epilepsy in Two Rural Onchocerciasis Hyperendemic Villages in the Center Region of Cameroon

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### Abstract

**Background:** Recently, there has been mounting evidence from Onchocerciasis-endemic regions that onchocerciasis causes epilepsy. The term Onchocerciasis-associated epilepsy has been used to describe this condition which constitutes an important but neglected public health problem. It leaves sufferers with severe sequelae in many countries where onchocerciasis is still endemic including Cameroon. This study had as main objective to generate baseline data on the prevalence of onchocerciasis-associated epilepsy in two rural villages endemic for onchocerciasis.

**Methods:** This was a population based cross-sectional study conducted from December 2018 to August 2019 in two rural villages (Mong and Nkongmessa) in the Monatélé health district of the center region of Cameroon. Door-to-door household visits were carried out to screen for persons with OAE. Onchocerciasis-associated epilepsy was defined using criteria predefined in other studies.

**Results:** One thousand, four hundred and forty-eight (1448) individuals from 202 households were screened. Fifty persons (32 from Mong and 18 from Nkongmessa) met the criteria for OAE. The prevalence of OAE was 1.7% for Nkongmessa and 7.7% for Mong. The mean age for the cases was 26.3 years. The most common seizure type was generalized tonic-clonic seizures (74%) followed by absence seizures (14%). Nodding and Nakalanga syndromes were identified in 2 cases each.

**Conclusion:** This study revealed a high prevalence of OAE. This novel evidence in the Monatélé health district, adds to the growing body of evidence in Cameroon on the need to provide comprehensive care for onchocerciasis-associated epilepsy and conduct further research to review health policies.

### Biography:

Mundih Noelar Njohjam is a recent graduate with a doctorate degree in medicine from the Faculty of medicine and biomedical sciences of the University of Yaoundé 1 in Cameroon. She is currently a volunteer at the neurology and neuroscience department of the Yaoundé central hospital and Brain Africa Research Initiative in Cameroon. She is also an aspiring physician-scientist in neuroscience with special interest in epilepsy. She has developed a great passion for improving clinical outcomes and patient experience of people with epilepsy in underserved and underdeveloped parts of the world especially in Africa after working with people living with epilepsy in her country.

### Speaker Publications:

1. Mundih Noelar Njohjam; "I have epilepsy, but it is not my social identity"; Body talk international. 2020.

[6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Epilepsy & Treatment;](#) Webinar- September 21-22, 2020.

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