Epilepsy is a common chronic disorder affecting at least 350,000 persons in the UK. Patients with blackouts and suspected epilepsy account for about 20% of new referrals to neurological outpatients and those with epilepsy a considerable proportion of patients under follow up.

In the last two decades developments in epilepsy have occurred on several fronts, with improvements in classification; development of new drugs and greater understanding of pharmacokinetics of existing drugs; and advances in neuroimaging contributing to better treatment and understanding of the pathophysiology. There has been an increased awareness of its psychological and social implications and an appreciation of quality of life issues.

In this supplement the first two articles address the assessment and diagnosis of patients with suspected epilepsy and consider its wide differential diagnosis. The next article addresses the management of epilepsy and outlines a model of multidisciplinary care. Finally, there is a pragmatic account of the treatment of status epilepticus, including specific dose schedules that hopefully trainees will use as an accessible guide for this neurological emergency (perhaps for their white coat pocket).

This supplement is not intended to be comprehensive and hopefully our key references and web guide will direct readers to important sources of information. The neurophysiological evaluation of epilepsy and psychological aspects will be dealt with in detail in subsequent supplements.

KEY REFERENCES

Classification

This gives the current classification of epilepsy.

Epidemiology and outcome

These are some of the papers from the National General Practice Study of Epilepsy that provides invaluable information on incidence, prevalence, and natural history of epilepsy in the community.
A population based study from the USA.

Aetiology

A study looking at the risk of epilepsy after various types of head injury.
A review of increasing understanding of the importance of genetics in epilepsy.

Imaging

A definitive review on advances in imaging and their application to the diagnosis and management of epilepsy.
**Therapeutics**

- Cochrane Epilepsy Group. Cochrane database of systematic reviews, issue 4, 2000; issue 4:717–24. These are reviews of some of the newer anticonvulsants and evidence from randomised controlled trials.

**Complications**


**Syncope**


**Guidelines**


**Driving regulations**
