

OFFICERS RECEIVE TEXAS SIZED TRAINING

This past year the Epilepsy Foundation Texas – Houston/Dallas/Fort Worth partnered with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide training on epilepsy and seizure first aid to nearly 40,000 correctional officers and employees throughout the state of Texas. Training Director Jimmy Dugger, an early advocate of the training reported that seizures in the prison setting create dangerous and confusing situations for inmates and officers. With over 152,660 inmates housed in state and county correctional units in Texas, the TDCJ Staff and Training Department recognized the importance of educating all employees on seizure recognition and proper response. The training emphasized recognizing the characteristics of seizures, especially complex seizures; understanding the behavior which may follow a seizure; appreciating the ramifications of non-treatment compliance; determining the proper course of action if a seizure occurs; and assessing the need for medical care.

This specialized training is especially important in light of 1984 study published in “Neurology” stating that the prevalence of epilepsy is 4 times higher for inmates versus the other men age 20-49, with head trauma being the most prevalent known cause of epilepsy for prisoners.

Dr. Omatola Hope and Dr. Jeremy Slater, faculty members of University of Texas Medical School Houston, presented the material to 180 TDCJ Staff Trainers who in turn provided extensive training sessions to 40,000 correctional, administrative, and ancillary staff across the state of Texas. In addition to the workshop, each training officer left with an educational DVD which was developed through a grant from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. Donna Stahlhut, CEO of the Epilepsy Foundation Texas (EFTX) remarked that “in addition to making our prisons safer we have spread the word about epilepsy and seizures to a large group of people throughout the state.”

Public education is a high priority for EFTX which reaches out not only to law enforcement and prison personnel, but also provides education programs for school personnel, students, care givers, seniors, employers and community organizations. The effort to bring accurate information and dispel myths about epilepsy is a core mission of the Epilepsy Foundation. For more information on the Epilepsy Foundation Texas explore our website at www.eftx.org.