

# NEURODIAGNOSTIC CORNER

A MONTHLY NEWS LETTER DEDICATED TO CHILDREN'S LEARNING

## Breaking News: QEEGs help diagnose Absence Seizures



### What is a QEEG?

A Quantitative Electroencephalograph, is a procedure that records electrical neuronal activity in the brain using modern technology. Dr. Swatzyna uses

the information gathered from a QEEG to identify and diagnose abnormalities in brain functioning and help direct further treatment. The procedure is non-invasive and pain free.

Absence Seizures, or silent seizures, are small seizures that many times go undiagnosed for years. Children who have Absence Seizures are unaware of them and miss out on the time that passes while they experience the seizure. Silent seizures happen many times a day for a few seconds at a time. For this reason children who experience absence seizures can fall behind in school, which can lead to behavioral social problems. Children experiencing absence seizures are often misdiagnosed as ADHD because the

### Silent Seizures

seizures they experience often make them seem distracted. When misdiagnosed, children are often put on medication that may make the seizure activity worse, and they do not respond well to typical interventions used for ADHD children. For this reason, children who have not responded well to typical interventions should be further evaluated. A QEEG can help properly diagnose absence seizures. Dr. Swatzyna works with a team of scientists to get the most accurate QEEG results.

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Ronald J. Swatzyna, Ph.D., L.C.S.W. is the Director of Neurotherapy and has worked for the Tarnow Center for Self-Management in

Houston for nine years. Dr. Swatzyna received his Masters and Doctorate from The University of Texas at Arlington in Social Work. He also is Board Certified in Biofeedback and Neurotherapy, Dr. Swatzyna specializes in diagnostically challenging patients who do not respond well to medication and often have multiple diagnoses. Dr. Swatzyna is published and continues to research. He believes in educating others and welcomes topics of interest to share in the Neurodiagnostic Corner newsletter.

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## Absence Seizures

Absence seizures, also called petit mal seizures, are characterized by sudden lapses of awareness lasting a few seconds. Often times they are difficult to identify and may look like the child is inattentive or daydreaming. There is no warning and no after-effect. This type of seizure affects children most commonly between the ages of 4 and 12 years old and can be the only type of seizure the child experiences.

After experiencing a seizure the child has no memory of the seizure and is not confused. Children are unaware they have experienced a seizure. The symptoms are difficult for parents and teachers to catch.

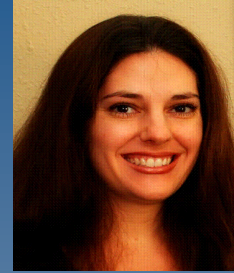
Children who have absence seizures can have many episodes in a day, leading to many problems. Undiagnosed, Absence Seizures can lead to problems in schoolwork that may cause behavioral problems and social awkwardness.

If the Absence Seizures are left unchecked children typically fall further behind as they progress through normal developmental stages. This is often seen as increased difficulty with learning and social interactions.

### Dr. Pastusek's

#### Medication information

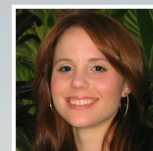
Medication may be indicated in the treatment of absence seizures when the seizures are causing impairment in learning. Absence seizures can be easily treated with seizure medication. The first line seizure medication that has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat absence seizures is Ethosuximide. This medication is generally well tolerated and provides the best coverage of symptoms with a lower side effect profile. However, if your child is unable to take this medication, Valproic Acid is the second line agent but carries a larger side effect profile. These are only two of the most common medications to help manage the symptoms of absence seizures. There are other medications that can be used and should be discussed with your provider if needed. The good news is many children outgrow absence seizures.



### Dr. Amber Pastusek

has joined the Tarnow Center! Dr. Pastusek attended Texas Tech University and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, graduating Magna Cum Laude and in the University Honors Program. She went on to complete her medical school education at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. She then attended the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas for her psychiatry residency and child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship. Dr. Pastusek is trained as a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist and is Board Certified. Her interests include evaluating Mood disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Learning Disorders, and Autism Spectrum Disorders.

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Ginger Abbott, M.S. is an assistant to Dr. Swatzyna. She has a Master's of Science in Early Childhood Disorders from the University of Texas at Dallas. She was a teacher at a therapeutic school for elementary age children and is currently working on becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor and becoming board certified in Neurofeedback.

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