Tourette Syndrome

What is Tourette Syndrome?

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is an inherited, neurological disorder characterized by multiple involuntary movements, called motor tics, and uncontrollable vocalizations called vocal or phonic tics. A tic is a sudden rapid, recurrent, non-rhythmic, stereotyped motor movement or vocalization.  

Diagnostic Criteria for Tourette Syndrome (DSM-IV TR)  

- Both motor and vocal tics are present during the illness, although not always at the same time.
- The tics occur many times a day (usually in bouts) nearly every day or off and on for more than 1 year, with never a tic-free period of more than 3 months in a row.
- The onset of TS occurs before 18 years of age.
- The disturbance is not caused by the direct physiological effects of medications or other substances, and is not the result of a general medical condition (e.g., seizures, Huntington’s disease or postviral encephalitis).
- In rare cases, people with TS may involuntarily shout obscenities (coprolalia) or constantly repeat the words of other people (echolalia).

TS can affect people of all racial and ethnic groups; males are affected 3 to 4 times more often than females. An estimated 200,000 Americans have TS, and perhaps as many as 1 in 100 people show a milder form of the disorder, such as chronic or transient tics in childhood.  

Although further research into the prevalence of TS will provide better data on rates in the United States, it is believed that TS affects 3 to 5 in every 10,000 individuals, and about 10 in every 10,000 school-age children.

The onset of TS and tics typically occurs when a child is 6 to 8 years old, with diagnosis usually occurring around this time as well. Although TS and tics might appear, disappear, and reappear, these disorders are considered chronic.

TS and related disorders can place individuals at higher risk for learning, behavioral, and social difficulties. Many studies have linked TS and tic disorders to higher rates of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and impairments associated with these co-morbid conditions.

References

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Tourette Syndrome Fact Sheet  

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http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/tourette/default.htm