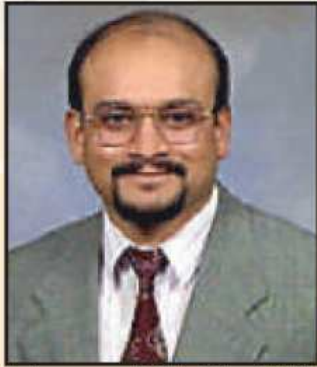


MEDICAL



Mohammed J. Zafar, M.D.

Q: My spouse has these twisting and painful movements of the head to the left side which was finally diagnosed as dystonia. What is this condition and is there an effective treatment?

A: Dystonia is a neurologic disorder characterized by sustained, uncontrollable muscle spasms resulting in abnormal (and

sometimes painful) movements and postures of the affected part of the body. Many have not heard of dystonia, even though it is the third most common movement disorder. Medical awareness of this condition has been increasing in the last few years with a better outlook for people with dystonia. Dystonia can affect any part of the body such as the face, jaw, neck (torticollis), hands or legs with variable impact on the quality of life. Some dystonias are brought on by certain activities such as writing or playing a musical instrument. This devastating condition does not discriminate and can affect anybody. Although in most cases the cause is still not well understood, the problem is felt to originate in certain nerve cells in the brain that control movement.

The good news is that there is treatment available. The most effective treatment is Botulinum (eg. Botox) local injections targeted to relax specific muscles responsible for the abnormal movements.

To learn more about this disorder, you are welcome to attend the upcoming Southwest MI Dystonia support group meeting on March 6, 2010 in Portage.