

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is pseudobulbar affect?

A: Pseudobulbar affect (PBA) is a neurologic disorder that causes sudden and unpredictable episodes of crying, laughing, or other associated emotional displays. PBA is estimated to impact more than 1 million people in the United States diagnosed with neurologic conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson's disease, dementias including Alzheimer's disease, stroke and traumatic brain injury.

Q: What causes PBA?

A: PBA may occur when disease or injury damages the area of the brain that controls normal expression of emotion. This damage can disrupt brain signaling causing a "short circuit," triggering episodes of involuntary emotional expressions.

Q: What is the impact of PBA?

A: PBA episodes can cause anxiety and embarrassment, particularly in public settings. For some people, these episodes can be so disruptive that they avoid social situations and grow to feel more and more isolated over time. PBA is not life threatening nor does PBA exacerbate a person's underlying neurologic disease or injury. However, studies have shown that PBA can significantly impact a person's quality of life and relationships.

Q: How is PBA diagnosed?

A: PBA can be diagnosed and treated separately from underlying neurologic disease or injury. Two standard rating scales are available to evaluate patients with PBA; the Center for Neurologic Study Lability Scale (CNS-LS) and the Pathological Laughing and Crying Scale (PLACS). Either scale may prove useful for the diagnosis of PBA, but the first step is to talk to your doctor.

Q: Is PBA a form of depression?

A: PBA episodes may look like symptoms of depression, and as a result, PBA is often misdiagnosed. However, unlike depression, PBA is a neurologic condition and the episodes are often sudden, unpredictable, and contrary to the person's mood.

Q: With what diseases can PBA be associated?

A: PBA may occur in patients diagnosed with neurologic conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson's disease, dementias including Alzheimer's disease, stroke and traumatic brain injury.

Q: How is PBA currently treated?

A: Presently no medications have been approved by the FDA for the treatment of PBA. Current therapy consists of the off-label use of anti-depressants and antipsychotics. However, the safety and efficacy of these agents in PBA have not been evaluated in clinical trials. New agents designed specifically for treatment of PBA are needed. Avanir Pharmaceuticals is investigating the efficacy and tolerability of an investigational new drug called Zenvia™ as a treatment for PBA. Zenvia has not been approved for use by the FDA.



For more information go to www.PBAinfo.org