

Learning about epilepsy is music to the ears

*A new CD-Rom aims to help children live positively with epilepsy
– with a little help from Handel.*



Encyclopaedia is launched by showbusiness legend Ken Dodd OBE

Handel's Water Music bursts out of the computer speakers when you boot up the new Interactive Junior Encyclopaedia of Epilepsy, a new CD-Rom designed to help children learn about their medical condition. One click on the easy to follow, alphabetically-arranged pages and the reason for this lively introduction becomes clear. Handel, the great baroque music composer, had epilepsy himself. And, as this fun resource for children demonstrates, so did a whole host of talented others, including Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Van Gogh and the writer, Dostoevsky.

Learning about famous people who lived with epilepsy is only part of the wealth of the information featured on the CD-Rom, edited by Dr Richard Appleton, an acknowledged expert on childhood epilepsy at Liverpool's Alder Hey Hospital, and available in the UK from Mersey

Region Epilepsy Association. The contents of the interactive computer programme are diverse, and include easy to follow facts, interactive puzzles, music and quality illustrations. Pages on the different types of seizure and medication, for example, are interspersed with clear information on how the brain works. There is also fun history learning, such as a page on the Code of Hammurabi, the King of Babylon's bizarre rules for people with epilepsy, as well as facts on social aspects, like careers and activities, and invaluable first aid advice.

'The idea is to empower children to learn about their condition, in a fun, interactive way,' says Peter Rogan, Chair of Mersey Region Epilepsy Association and the man behind the idea. 'Children learn better when stimulated, and we want them to enjoy learning about epilepsy. Learning is exciting and fun – and the CD-Rom reflects this.'



The encyclopaedia has long since been a popular resource for children and families in book form. 'When we first published the encyclopaedia, computer ownership wasn't widespread,' continues Peter 'Now, most families in the UK and Ireland have access to a computer, whether at home, at school, or via the local library. It occurred to us that children



enjoy using a computer and that a CD-Rom which presented information which will benefit them in an original way, would not only be highly educational, but fun too. Because the CD-Rom is interactive, and very fast, children don't have to plod through page after page. If they do come across a word that interests them and if they want to know more, the information is immediately available with the click of a mouse.'

Epilepsy, a neurological condition which causes seizures, is very common in children - it is estimated that in excess of 80,000 young people in the UK have the condition, so the need for information is

high. Although created for children – the CD-Rom is suitable for use from late juniors through to early adulthood – the encyclopaedia will also be useful to people of all ages looking for a basic introduction.

'Everyone who knows a child with epilepsy needs information,' says Peter Rogan. 'This CD-Rom aims to increase confidence, not just of the child with epilepsy, but others around them too. The more people know, the less likely it is

that epilepsy is misunderstood. The CD-Rom might be new, but fear surrounding epilepsy is not. Lack of knowledge breeds this fear, and fear can turn into prejudice. So the more everyone knows the better.' Click on the pages of the CD-Rom and you will find a positive, realistic approach to living with epilepsy. Not only does it feature great role models like Handel to prove epilepsy needn't stop children succeeding in life, it also focuses on what a child can do, rather than what they can't. This builds the child's confidence and enables parents and carers to encourage them to live as full a life as possible. 'Parents and teachers must remember they haven't got an epileptic child, but a child who happens to have epilepsy,' says Peter. 'We've included information on career, and activities, such as swimming, to allow children and their families to live positively with the condition, rather than surrender to it.'



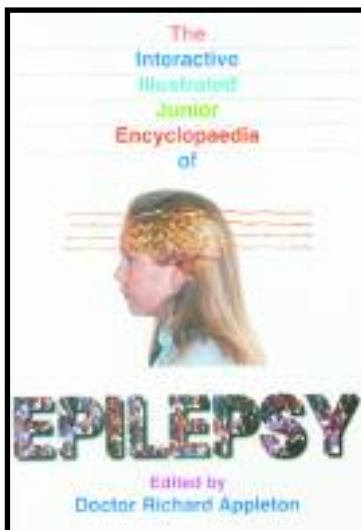
The involvement of Dr Richard Appleton, of Liverpool's Alder Hey Hospital, ensures the information is accurate and up to date. 'We're delighted to have had the services of Dr Richard Appleton, a recognised international expert on the treatment of children with epilepsy,' says Peter Rogan. 'We're also particularly pleased that the CD-Rom will be available to people in Ireland via Brainwave, the Irish Epilepsy Association, an organisation which is imaginatively run and which has strong links with Mersey Region Epilepsy Association. In addition, UCB, the pharmaceutical company, have recognised the value of the CD-Rom and made a generous donation towards its production, which has allowed all the profits to go to charitable funds to help children and adults with epilepsy. This means that the CD-Rom helps children in two ways – by raising funds for the future, and by helping them to live positively in the present.'

As well as having a lasting influence as a composer, Handel, it seems, can now add helping to empower children to live with epilepsy among his list of achievements.

Photograph featuring Ken Dodd by courtesy of Trinity Newspapers Ltd

MERSEY REGION EPILEPSY

Registered Charity Number: 504366



Officially launched by showbusiness legend Ken Dodd, at St Vincent's Primary School Liverpool, The Interactive Illustrated Junior Encyclopaedia of Epilepsy, priced at £10.00 (plus p&p), is available from Mersey Region Epilepsy Association. For purchases of more than one disc there will be no charge for package and postage.

All proceeds go to Mersey Region Epilepsy Association's charitable fund, to further its work and support its research fund to better the lives of children and adults with epilepsy in the future.

An invoice will be issued with each order dispatched.

Discs can be ordered in any one of several ways:

- by post using an official Purchase Order (see address below)
- by fax (0151 298 2333) using an official Purchase Order
- by email: epilepsy@mrea.demon.co.uk
- by telephone on 0151 298 2666 (24 hour service)

Alternatively, if in the area, simply call into our office and pick one up. The address is:-

Mersey Region Epilepsy Association
Neurosupport Centre, Norton Street, Liverpool L3 8LR



"The Interactive Illustrated Junior Encyclopaedia of Epilepsy is hugely informative and certainly presents a complex medical condition in a clear imaginative way. It is a great addition to any electronic library."

Phil Stewart, Headteacher, St. Vincent's Primary School, Liverpool.