



Silent Killer Continues To Go Undetected

SADS School Nurse Awareness Campaign

Salt Lake City, Utah – The Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes (SADS) continue to kill at an alarming rate, claiming the lives of several thousand young people every year. The sudden and unexpected deaths are due to a heart arrhythmia brought on by detectable, but often overlooked heart rhythm abnormalities or repolarization. It can strike at any time.

May 11th is National School Nurse Day. SADS is targeting this day to educate school nurses across the country on cardiac arrhythmias. There are approximately 50,000 registered nurses in public school systems across the country caring for more than 52 million students. School nurses are one of the first lines of defense for our children. They are advocates for student care and provide counseling and medical referrals for parents when unexplained syncope or cardiac arrest/sudden death occurs in school-but they can only care and counsel if they have been informed.

As many as 12 in every 5,000 young people may be genetically predisposed to these deadly conditions and they affect every walk of life. Former NBA star Yinka Dare and NCAA basketball player Hank Gathers, both tremendous athletes, died due to the sudden arrhythmia disorders.

In 1991, Dick Stafford lost his almost sixteen-year-old son, Andrew, who suddenly lost consciousness and died due to sudden heart arrhythmia brought on by undetected Long QT Syndrome. The hospital staff was puzzled why a healthy, normal football player could not sustain a heartbeat. Further medical inquiry could not pinpoint a specific cause of death but Dick was urged to begin genetic testing with himself and his two surviving children. The test results indicated that they suffered from the Long Q.T. Syndrome. With proper diagnosis, Andrew's siblings Doug and Katy began successful treatment for Long Q.T. Syndrome and are doing well.

Dick's story is all too common. "Though there are not words adequate to describe the death of a son and brother, we are grateful that through Andrew's death, we were able to have a diagnosis for Katy and Doug." says Stafford.

"Early detection and proper treatment of Long QT patients can save lives," says Dr. G. Michael Vincent, a leading cardiologist in the detection of the LQT syndrome. "If a child, teenager or young adult suffers a blackout without an obvious cause, especially if it was precipitated by exercise, swimming or emotional distress, I recommend asking the doctor about Long QT."

Warning Signs

Your child should be seen by a doctor if she/he has:

- Family history of unexpected, unexplained sudden death in a young person
- Fainting (syncope) or seizure during exercise, excitement or startle
- Consistent or unusual chest pain and/or shortness of breath during exercise

We recognize the important contributions that school nurses make toward the health and well being of our children and youth. School nurses are unsung heroes as they both effectively and efficiently meet the daily and emergency needs of the student populations they serve. With their help we can increase our ability to identify children that need to be diagnosed and save lives.

The SADS Foundation needs your help to save the lives and support the families of children and young adults who are genetically predisposed to sudden death due to heart rhythm abnormalities. To find out more about information about, activities, events, and programs available in your area, contact us at www.sads.org or 1-800-STOP-SAD.

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Supporting Families. Saving Lives