

Alien Hand Syndrome

Rare Disease



Imagine yourself watching TV and relaxing after work in a dimly lit bedroom. And then, you suddenly realize the pain of a deep and sharp pinch on your left thigh. Much to your surprise you observe your left hand as the culprit. You release the pinch with the help of your right hand, while it resists doing so. Finally you are successful in the attempt and end up staring at your left hand which just does not feel like your own. While it sounds peculiar, it is actually a very rare medical condition known as the "Alien hand syndrome".

It is a rare neurological disorder in which one hand functions involuntarily, patient completely unaware of its action. As described above the symptoms involve involuntary reaching, grasping, stuffing food in the mouth and self inflicting punching or choking. An individual with this problem has full sensation in his hand, but is unable to control its movements. The hand has the capability of acting autonomously as if it has a 'will of its own'.

Also known as anarchic hand, AHS was first identified in 1909 and 40 to 50 cases have been reported since then. It usually happens as a side effect of brain surgery or an injury to the corpus callosum (the area of the brain which connects the two halves of the brain), a brain tumor, aneurysm or stroke. AHS is manifested as a result of disconnection between different areas of the brain.

No particular treatment for AHS has been identified till now, however the strategy is to keep it occupied and involved in a task such as manipulation of objects. Involvement of the hand in object manipulation inhibits its involuntary movement. Also, certain learned tasks help to enhance the voluntary control over the involved hand. ■

HEAL humor *gay world...*

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