

Transcript: Nath Nodding syndrome

Dr. Avindra Nath: I'm Avi Nath. I'm the Chief of the Section of Infections of the Nervous System at the National Institutes of Health.

Nodding syndrome is a seizure disorder that occurs in children and is geographically localized to certain parts of Africa. The current findings that are being published clearly show that there is an immune response to this parasite called *Onchocerca* that seems to attack the brain.

Most of the other things that people have tried to associate with Nodding syndrome have not really panned out very well. We think that our observations, for the first time, really provide a testable hypothesis that can be explored in the field. We think that this is a major observation and could be an important breakthrough in the understanding of Nodding syndrome.

We brought a family from Uganda to NIH. The reason for bringing them was that we really wanted to study the clinical manifestations of Nodding syndrome and we wanted to try and see if there was genetic basis for it, what other neurological problems that might occur and look at the brain using techniques that are not available in other countries and even in other institutions.

Everything went really well. I was very impressed with what the Clinical Center here is able to accomplish. This is something that could not have been done anyplace else in the world. The amount of information that we have gathered from them has actually been tremendous and it's taught us a lot. And it's a perfect example of how NIH can really solve these mysteries where nobody else has been able to make a difference.