

SPOTLIGHT

on...neurologists



Q&A with Dr Jeremy Stern, Consultant Neurologist and Tourettes Action Honorary Medical Director

Tourettes Action interviewed Dr Stern to find out how a neurologist can be of support to someone with Tourette Syndrome.

What is Neurology?

Neurology is the branch of medicine that deals with problems of the nervous system, which is made up of the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscles. Common conditions of patients that see neurologists include migraine, stroke, blackouts, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and other areas.

What is the role of a neurologist to someone who suspects they have TS or is already diagnosed with the condition?

The neurologist can confirm the diagnosis after hearing the history of the condition and performing a physical examination. They can advise on treatments for TS and recommend medications that the GP may continue to prescribe under the neurologist's monitoring.

Do all neurologists have extensive understanding of TS, or is this a specialist field within Neurology?

Tourette Syndrome and tics are covered by a subspecialist area of neurology called Movement Disorders. Most adult neurologists have a subspecialist interest but still see all other kinds of neurological patient too. For instance, a specialist in MS would also have a lot of expertise in seeing patients with migraine and seizures too. Some movement disorders like Parkinson's disease and other causes of tremor are commonly seen by general neurologists, but they may have less experience in treating TS. Neurologists have less expertise than psychiatrists and neuropsychiatrists in assessing and managing the conditions that can be associated with TS, for example OCD and ADHD but are familiar with the link with the link with tics. Neurologists do often see patients who suffer from anxiety and depression and may also recommend management of those areas.

Do Neurologists prescribe medication for TS?

Yes, but this will depend on the experience of the neurologist in treating tics. Neurologists are not experts in treating associated condition such as OCD or ADHD but do often see patients who suffer from anxiety and depression and may also recommend management of those areas.

How do you get referred to a Neurologist?

Usually by referral from your GP. Sometimes the first neurologist you see may refer you to a colleague with an interest in tic problems for a more expert view. Tourettes Action has a list of specialists in TS, both psychiatrists and neurologists. It will usually be appropriate to start with a referral to local services.

Can a Neurologist refer someone to other services, i.e. behavioural therapy?

Neurologists do not usually have access to specialised behavioural therapists who are experienced in treating tics. This problem also applies to psychiatrists as this form of treatment is unfortunately not very well provided in the UK (and also in other countries). Tourettes Action has a list of therapists which might include possibilities where you live, your neurologist may not be aware of this.

Who is more likely to refer a child to a Neurologist – a GP or paediatrician?

A paediatrician may refer to a child (paediatric) neurologist, but children with tics are more likely to be seen in child psychiatry services. Adult neurologists usually only see patients of 16 years or older.

About Dr Jeremy Stern

Dr Stern is a consultant neurologist at St Georges Hospital, London and is the Honorary Medical Director for Tourettes Action

Tourettes Action would like to thank Dr Stern for his very helpful explanations to our questions

RESOURCES

Tourettes Action consultant list - please contact Tourettes Action to be sent a list of consultants who specialise in diagnosing and treating Tourette Syndrome

Helpdesk phone: 0300 777 8427

Helpdesk email: help@tourettes-action.org.uk