

Online Training Course

# 7 RARE & UNUSUAL SYNDROMES

With Professor Barbara Wilson OBE

Professionals working in the neuro sector are familiar with many conditions including traumatic brain injury, stroke, encephalitis, hypoxic brain damage and dementia to mention a few. Sometimes, however, we need to assess patients with unusual diagnoses that we have never come across before. This course will inform you of 7 rare and unusual syndromes which you may encounter one day.

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# 7 RARE & UNUSUAL SYNDROMES

An exploration of syndromes you have probably never heard of but may encounter one day

**With Professor Barbara Wilson OBE Clinical Neuropsychologist**

Professionals working in the neuro sector are familiar with many conditions including traumatic brain injury, stroke, encephalitis, hypoxic brain damage and dementia to mention a few. Sometimes, however, we need to assess patients with unusual diagnoses that we have never come across before. This course will inform you of 7 rare and unusual syndromes which you may encounter one day.

## SESSION ONE

This presentation describes six unusual and rare syndromes that most of us have probably never seen but may be asked to assess one day. All of the syndromes are associated with cognitive deficits. The main characteristics of these syndromes are described and possible cognitive and behavioural deficits presented. Suggestions for assessment are also presented.

The syndromes explored are:

1. Fatal Familial Insomnia (FFI)
2. Sheehan's Syndrome
3. Alexander's Disease
4. Evan's Syndrome
5. Diogenes Syndrome
6. Akinetic Mutism.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this presentation participants will:

- Be aware of the characteristics of six unusual syndromes
- Know the kinds of deficits each syndrome is likely to present with
- Recognise if any of their patients may have had one of these syndromes
- Be able to consider possible assessment procedures for one or more of these syndromes
- Recognise a possible childhood dementia
- Look out for other possible rare syndromes that can easily be missed

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this presentation participants will:

- Be alert to rare syndromes that can be missed or misdiagnosed
- Be able to carry out hypothesis testing to confirm or disconfirm a rare syndrome
- Know when to refer on to others to support or reject a possible diagnosis
- Consider publication to enhance public knowledge of a rare syndrome

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## SESSION TWO

This presentation explores Balints Syndrome. This rare syndrome is described as having three components:

1. Psychic paralysis of gaze or optic apraxia, an inability to look voluntarily into the peripheral field
2. Optic ataxia, which is an inability to localise in space or manually point to visually presented objects
3. Simultanagnosia where, despite adequate visual acuity, it is impossible to process more than one visually presented object at a time

Clinically, it is often the second of these that raises the possibility of something seriously wrong and provokes the clinician to test out hypotheses to determine if the patient does or does not have Balint's Syndrome. Three case studies are described in detail including one with Covid-19. Consideration is given as to what treatment is available.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this presentation participants will:

- Understand the three components which comprise Balint's Syndrome.
- Know the anatomical structures involved.
- Be aware of the conditions which may give rise to the condition
- Realise that services for visually impaired people are not appropriate for those with Balint's Syndrome
- Be alert to the possibility that this rare syndrome may be easily missed
- Learn about the ways to assess suspected Balint's Syndrome
- Appreciate some of the treatment approaches which can benefit people with the condition

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this presentation participants will:

- Be better at determining whether a patient does or does not have the syndrome
- Be alert to the fact that a rare syndrome might sometimes follow a stroke caused by Covid-19.
- Realise that tests involving manipulation and visual scanning are inappropriate when assessing patients with the syndrome
- Know not to refer to services for people with visual impairments
- Recognise that some spontaneous recovery may occur
- Be familiar with education and compensatory strategies when treating people with Balint's Syndrome.

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**Professor Barbara A Wilson, OBE CPsychol, PhD, FBPSS,  
FmedSci, AcSS**

**Clinical Neuropsychologist, The Oliver Zangwill Centre, Ely  
& St George's Hospital**



Barbara Wilson is a clinical neuropsychologist who has worked in brain injury rehabilitation for 42 years. She has published 29 books (with another in press), 201 peer reviewed papers, 123 chapters and 8 neuropsychological tests. She has won many awards for her work including an OBE from the Queen in 1998, for services to rehabilitation; five lifetime achievement awards, one from the British Psychological Society, one from the International Neuropsychological Society, one from the National Academy of Neuropsychology, one from the Encephalitis Society and one from the NHS 70 year anniversary parliamentary awards where she was regional champion for the Midlands and East Region. In 2011 she received the Ramon Y Cahal award from the International Neuropsychiatric Association.

In 2014 she received an honorary degree from The University of Cordoba, Argentina. Also in 2014 she received the M.B. Shapiro award from The Division of Clinical Psychology (affiliated to The British Psychological Society) for Distinguished Contributions to Clinical Psychology. In 2019 she received the annual award from the Spanish Clinical Neuropsychological Society. She is editor of the journal "Neuropsychological Rehabilitation" which she founded in 1991 and in 1996 she established the Oliver Zangwill Centre for Neuropsychological Rehabilitation. A rehabilitation centre in Quito, Ecuador is named after her. She is currently president of the UK Encephalitis Society and is on the management committee of The World Federation of Neuro Rehabilitation. The UK Division of Neuropsychology has named a prize after her, the 'Barbara A Wilson prize for distinguished contributions to neuropsychology'. She is a Fellow of The British Psychological Society, The Academy of Medical Sciences and The Academy of Social Sciences. She is honorary professor at the University of Hong Kong, the University of Sydney and the University of East Anglia. She has held 30 research grants. Her work has resulted in changes in clinical practice. For example, as a result of a randomised control trial evaluating a paging system to improve the everyday functioning of people with memory and planning problems, the local health authority set this up as a health care system for people throughout the United Kingdom.

Barbara A Wilson has been involved in the training of clinical psychology trainees (interns) for many years. Some of her ex students have been high achievers. These include Jonathan Evans, Linda Clare, Nick Alderman, Jane Powell, Tatia Lee and Agnes Shiel, all of whom are full professors

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