

Jan. 10, 2008

Page 36

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

SCIENCE

Epileptic Fits, Earthquakes Are Found to Share Patterns

NEW SCIENTIST—JAN. 12

Epileptic fits exhibit some of the same patterns as seismic shocks, new research suggests, raising doubt about the longstanding belief that seizures occur randomly.

The research, led by neurologist Ivan Osorio of the University of Kansas, found patterns of "waiting times" between epileptic fits that are similar to those of earthquake occurrences. Also, just as earthquakes are preceded by tiny tremors imperceptible to humans, epileptic fits are preceded by neural spikes detectable only on brain scans. The analysis, not yet peer reviewed, compared the brain activity of more than 16,000 epileptic seizures with seismological data from 300,000 earthquakes.

The researchers say these and other patterns might eventually hold the key to predicting and possibly preventing epileptic fits. Matthew Walker, who researches epilepsy at University College London, says the work sounds promising, but he cautions that the research is in its early days.

WSJ.com

See more on our blog at WSJ.com/InformedReader
Send comments to informedreader@wsj.com