

Epilepsia / Volume 63, Issue 3 / p. 551-564

SPECIAL REPORT

## The worldwide epilepsy treatment gap: A systematic review and recommendations for revised definitions – A report from the ILAE Epidemiology Commission

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First published: 10 January 2022

<https://doi.org/10.1111/epi.17112>

Citations: 1

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### Abstract

#### Objective

In order to more appropriately apply and understand the “epilepsy treatment gap” (ETG) concept in current health systems, revised conceptual and operational definitions of ETG are timely and necessary. This article therefore systematically reviews worldwide studies of the ETG, distinguishing high-, middle-, and low-income regions, and provides recommendations for an updated International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) definition of ETG.

#### Methods

A systematic review of the ETG was performed using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) standards. The search was conducted from January 1990 to July 2019, in the online databases of Ovid MEDLINE and Embase. Identified abstracts were reviewed in duplicate and data independently extracted using a standard

proforma. Data describing treatment gap information including both diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of access to epilepsy treatment were recorded. Descriptive statistics are presented.

## Results

The treatment gap reported in the 45 distinctive populations represented 33 countries. Treatment gap definitions varied widely. The reported ETGs ranged broadly from 5.6% in Norway to 100% in parts of Tibet, Togo, and Uganda. The wide range of reported ETGs was multifactorial in origin including true differences in the availability and utilization of health care among study populations, variations in operational definitions of the epilepsy treatment gap, and methodological differences in sampling and identifying representative epilepsy cases in populations.

### 3.1 Significance and recommendations

For the ETG to be a useful metric to compare levels of unmet epilepsy care across different countries and regions, a standardized definition must be adapted, recognizing some of the limitations of the current definitions. Our proposed definition takes into account the lack of effective health care insurance, the diagnostic gap, the therapeutic gap, quality-of-care, and other unmet health care needs.”

#### Citing Literature



#### Supporting Information



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