

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

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Taking a selfie, or self-portrait using your smartphone may seem like an everyday thing. If you're living with epilepsy however, that selfie may be the reason for your next seizure. Based on a study published in the scientific journal, *Seizure*, Dalhousie University authors Dr. Paula Brna and Elizabeth Gordon recommend that those with photosensitive epilepsy may want to be a bit more careful taking selfies.

What is a Photosensitive Seizure?

Photosensitive seizures are a common affliction for a small percentage of those living with epilepsy. This phenomenon leaves those who suffer from it at greater risk of having a seizure when they are exposed to sudden bursts of light like flickering lights or strobes. But what about built-in features of a smart phone's camera such as the LED light? Could that be added to list of light sources that might evoke a seizure?

Recently, an interesting phenomenon was observed in a teenage girl who was having a three-day EEG with video study in an in-patient setting. Totally bored, she decided to snap a selfie. At that exact moment, the EEG showed sudden bursts of brain activity, indicative of a seizure. She had a photosensitive seizure. The patient had already shown involuntary shock-like muscle contractions triggered by light, a condition known as photosensitive myoclonus. But what could have caused it?

Could a Smart Phone LED Light Cause a Seizure?

The authors of the paper are unsure whether the cause of the reaction was the camera's flash or pulsing LED light. Dr. Brna suggests that it was the LED light that triggered the patient's photosensitive seizure. These LED light are a feature built into a smart phone camera and its purpose is to emit a series of flashing lights that reduces red-eye. Dr. Brna also noted that there's already data that suggests that taking selfies can be a dangerous distraction, and that the implication of a potential seizure from flashing lights could lead to a disaster.

While this study has been published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, it's important to note that the observations made in the study were based on one

subject. While more studies are needed in order to confirm the findings, it is important to understand that there might be an added risk factor present for those with photosensitive epilepsy.

Think of how many times we use our phone on a daily basis. While on the go, with friends or family, the use of camera phones is essentially limitless in today's modern age. However, if the findings observed in this study are proven, then taking measures to inform those who live with this type of epilepsy may be the first step in preventing seizures caused by taking self-portraits.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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