

Endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy is prohibited for patients under 20 years old in Taiwan

Endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy (ETS) has come into widespread use for palmar hyperhidrosis. Side effects after ETS was widely discussed in Taiwan society in the past few months. Lots of people in Taiwan suffer from hyperhidrosis palmaris. ETS is covered by the National Health Insurance, and patient billing for this operation does not exceed US\$ 60. This is why this operation is so popular here¹.

Patients with severe compensatory sweating after ETS must change clothes several times a day (some patients complained that they change as often as 10 times a day), resulting in serious impact on work and social interaction. Patients suffering from such serious side effects in Taiwan have formed a support group based on an Internet discussion forum to request the government to take this problem seriously. Starting in October 2004, The Department of Health, Executive Yuan, Taiwan, has prohibited surgeons from performing this operation on patients under 20 years old. To our knowledge, this type of support group also exists in United States, England, Sweden, Spain and Japan (Table 1).

ETS is a relatively safe and simple procedure. However the side effects are possibly devastating². All physicians providing this service and all peoples preparing to undergo this treatment should know this well.

Table 1: Websites built by suffers of side effects after ETS

Website	URL	Country (Language)
ETS And Reversals Discussion Forum	http://pub157.ezboard.com/betsandreversals	United States (English)
World Against Sympathectomy	http://www.truthaboutets.com/	United States (English)
The Sympathetic Association	http://home.swipnet.se/sympatiska/index3.htm	Sweden (English)
Patients Against Sympathetic Surgery	http://www.ets-sideeffects.netfirms.com/	Australia (English)
Radisson Group	http://www.noetsuk.com/	Britain and Ireland (English)
Family of Compensatory Sweating Sufferers	http://home.pchome.com.tw/family/vivi12175/	Taiwan (Chinese)
ETS Side Effects	http://www.geocities.jp/etscontroversialop/index.html	Japan (Japanese)
Hyperhidrosis Forum	http://www.terra.es/personal8/hiperhidrosis/principal.htm	Spain (Spanish)

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