Infantile spasms and West syndrome; The future is here.

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**WHERE:** Room 2226
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**HOST:** Dr. T. Thippeswamy

**FOOD SERVED!**

Epileptic encephalopathies in infancy include syndromes with onset in the neonatal period and during the first year of age. The most common is infantile spasms (West syndrome). West syndrome is an age-specific seizure disorder characterized by the presence of intractable seizures, characteristic EEG patterns (hypsarrhythmia and electrodecremental responses) and often progressive mental deterioration with features of autism. To date, there are several clinical controversies that need to be addressed: are infantile spasms and hypsarrhythmia a form of status epilepticus?; what is the common substrate that may underlie the emergence of infantile spasms?; what are the factors that influence the transition to other epileptic syndromes?; finally, what factors determine the outcome?. Available symptomatic treatments include the use of hormonal based regimens, antiepileptic drugs, administration of vitamins, immunotherapy, the ketogenic diet, and surgery. While these treatment may modify the severity of the spasms, they do not lead to cures. The recent description of several new models of infantile spasms is a positive step towards the development of novel treatments that can stop the progression of spasms and prevent mental retardation. One of these models, the multiple hit model, has many similarities to the human condition. In this model, we have identified disease-modifying approaches that can be translated to therapeutic applications and possible cures in infants with West syndrome. It is anticipated that, by forming effective multi-institutional collaborations among clinicians and scientists we will be able eradicate this disease in the near future.