

## First-Person Perspective of Alice in Wonderland Like Visual Perceptions Presented Primary as Microsomatognosia as Leading Symptom of a 24 Years-Old Student From Chile

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### Abstract

AIWS is a disorientating form of seizures that affect in peculiar visual perception. AIWS is a neurological form of seizures that can affect the brain, especially the temporoparietal junction and visual pathways leading to impaired and bizarre visual perceptions. The origin of AIWS is yet not known exactly. Cases of migraines, brain tumors, depression episodes, epilepsy, delirium, psychotropic drugs, ischemic stroke, EBV, mycoplasma and malaria infections correlate like seizures with AIWS are published before.

**Keywords:** Alice in Wonderland syndrome; Children; Microsomatognosia.

### Introduction

The first description of this new entity was published by John Todd in 1955 [1]. John Todd defined it as "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by the author Lewis Carroll. Lewis Carroll suffered itself from migraine episodes.

Patients with Alice in Wonderland syndrome describe visual, auditory, and tactile hallucinations and perceptual disturbances. The origin of AIWS is yet not known exactly. Cases of migraines, brain tumors, depression episodes, epilepsy, delirium, psychotropic

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drugs, ischemic stroke, EBV, mycoplasma and malaria infections correlate like seizures with AIWS are published before. Neuroimaging studies (MRT, PET, EEG) show disorders of brain regions including the temporoparietal junction, the temporal lobe and the occipital lobe, diminished blood flow in this brain regions, as a typical localization of the visual pathways.

We present a retrospective first person perspective as experience of a, to date, 24 years old biology student from Chile, who describes in detail his visual experiences with microsomatognosia as primary symptom.

## Case Report

### Retrospective First-Person Experience of Microsomatognosia (24 Years-Old Biology Student from Chile)

Retrospective description (first-person perspective, 24 years-old biology student)

It has happened since I have memory and I can barely describe it better than this. Once I realize it's happening it's always in the same situation, sitting and talking to a person, right in front of them. I feel like in some way my mind goes to the back of my head and the voice of the other person becomes super far from me and I can't even pay attention to what they are saying anymore. At the same time, their head gets super small, and I interpret it as just their head going far, as a thing that becomes tiny because of how far they are. I'm pretty sure it lasts for some minutes, not too long but not for some seconds, something between 2 min to 8-10

min. I say that I'm pretty sure because in some way I think I'm not aware of the time at that moment, but I can't measure it because it has happened always while I'm sitting so, I've never been on movement while it happens and it always seems to be when I'm pretty focused on chats. I also know that as a child it was more often than now that the last episode was about 3 weeks ago and it's the first time of this year. Thinking about how often it is I would say that definitely it's not too frequent now, maybe twice or three times per year but in my childhood, it would happen maybe once or twice per month. I've never experienced things going bigger or migraines as most descriptions about AIWS information and research shows. The last episode was 3 weeks ago and again it was exactly in the same way, tiny head, the deep perception got weird, and the voice of my flatmate sounded pretty far even though she was right in front of me, no more than 2 meters and it was the first time I described it to someone because I was kind of scare of people thinking that I'm going crazy or something. One of the things that got my attention was that it might be related to poor sleep and I'm currently, since a month ago, not having a good sleep at all, actually here it's 4:40 am and I'm still up. I would say that everytime that I try to recall the memories it appears to be something that I dreamt off or not so real, so I thought for several years that I was making them up. These episodes are so far away one from each other now that I feel nothing but curiosity about it, so I talked to my psychologist, and she talked about this syndrome and most of the signs are there so I don't know.

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## Discussion

John Todd, a British scientist and psychologist, described in 1955 the visual perception of micro- and macrosomatognosia, the curious perception of own body images, and called it the Alice in Wonderland Syndrome. Lippman et al. described it first in 1952, but didn't define it as Alice in Wonderland syndrome. Alice in Wonderland syndrome seems to be hereditary [2]. There are only a few case reports of patients, where family members suffer from the same visual perceptions, most often mother and son [3]. Further research in this interesting field of research is necessary, possibly by next generation sequencing, especially in families [3]. Alice in Wonderland Syndrome (AIWS) includes curious visual perceptions of the body image, the sense of time and illusionary visual perceptions [4]. The sense of time can vary in patients, some recognize slowing of time perception, some realize a very fast impression of time perception.

Body perception deprived by illusion and fear, sometimes for many years in early childhood, and can affect the child's normal development in the family and social surroundings [1]. AIWS has been published in various manuscripts in correlation with infectious diseases such as mumps fever, zika virus infection, varicella-induced optic neuromyelitis, borreliosis, H1N1 influenza infection and EBV infection [5]. The true origin of Alice in Wonderland Syndrome is to date unknown. Epilepsy, migraine episodes, state of encephalomyelitis, LSD or mast cell

stabilizer are other related drug relations in correlation with AIWS-like seizures. Recent articles state the correlation between physical or sexual abuse and Alice in Wonderland like-seizures [5-8]. Patients with AIWS may develop visual hallucinations, wrong perception of their own body image, as called microsomatognosy or macrosomatognosy. These visual perceptions are called metamorphoses or Lilliputian hallucination episodes, which refer to objects that appear either smaller or larger than reality.

Zoopsy is a severe hallucination form that is sometimes related with Alice in Wonderland Syndrome. This experience with zoopsies is a common symptom of a variety of conditions, like delirium states. AIWS can be accompanied with high fever, some people may experience more intense and obvious hallucinations, seeing things that are not there, and misinterpreting events and situations. A disturbed perception of time is well known in patients with Alice in Wonderland syndrome. Time seems to go very slowly, similar to an LSD experience, and the lack of time and space perspective can also lead to a twisted sense of speed. For example, in reality you have been able to make very slow progress, but one person has been struck as if you are sprinting uncontrollably over a rolling sidewalk, leading to severe, overwhelming confusion. Recent articles showed correlations to position in bed, the presence of seizure most often in the evening hours, the induction of AIWS seizures by special body and body part

position in bed, most often in lying position [9,10].

Moreover, traumatic patients could get experiences with AIWS like visual perceptions [9]. Finally, this case shows that the course of the AIWS-like visual perception, such as isolated, experiences

microsomatognosia in a first-person form and is still not found frequently in world literature to this day. Further research will focus on finding the gene location of AIWS, the genetic background of the disease. IN future, Alice in Wonderland syndrome could be, when gene locus is clearly localized, cured by CRISP-CAS 9 treatment.

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