

Paper gets the message across about epilepsy

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Jennifer Cheng

jennifer.cheng@scmp.com

When real estate consultant Melanie Krepp had a seizure in her office earlier this year, the last thing she wanted was for her boss to call the ambulance.

Although Canadian Krepp (pictured), 35, was lucid, she could not tell her boss to leave her alone because she had lost control of her muscles. All she needed was for her colleagues to clear the space around her.

Now, epileptic employees such as Krepp can educate colleagues with a paper published last month on the rights of employees with epilepsy in the workplace and employers' obligations to them.

The paper, on sale for HK\$500, was produced by non-profit organisation Enlighten - Action for Epilepsy and law firm DLA Piper, with funding from last year's Operation Santa Claus fundraising drive organised by the *South China Morning Post* and RTHK.

Epilepsy is caused when the brain releases excessive electrical



signals, disturbing brain activity and leading to seizures.

It is the first such report in Hong Kong, where more than 65,000 people suffer from epilepsy, and addressing the concerns of employees who fear a seizure in the workplace might lead to discrimination, the loss of their job or social exclusion.

"I never want people to feel sorry for me ... But I think it's only fair for them to know what to do if something does happen," said Krepp, who has lived in Hong Kong for six years.

At the paper's launch, DLA Piper associate Jeanette Tam Sze-man explained that people with epilepsy did not need to tell a potential employer because they were assessed on whether they could fulfil the job requirements. And once employed, there is still no obligation for an epileptic person to disclose the disorder.

The paper also points out that under the Employees Compensation Ordinance, an employer is liable to compensate employees who suffer an injury in the course of their work.