

E-Pearl of the Week

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Distinguishing dystonic tremor from essential tremor

Rhythmic dystonic contractions may produce a tremor that is typically, but not always, irregular. If a tremor is not clearly irregular, demonstrating that it is position sensitive may be useful in differentiating a dystonic tremor from essential tremor:

1. A Dystonic tremor is frequently exacerbated by moving an affected body part in opposition to dystonic muscle contractions.
2. Dystonic tremor is often extinguished at the "null point." This is the position where an affected body part is not influenced by involuntary dystonic contractions. It can be found by moving the affected body part in the direction of the dystonic contractions.

Reference

Fahn S, Jankovic J, Editors. Principles and Practice of Movement Disorders. Philadelphia: Churchill Livingstone; 2007:311,464.

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Disclosure: Dr. Barrett has nothing to disclose.