

Sleep Disorders and Its Homoeopathic Management

Sleep is as important as diet or exercise, it should not be taken for granted as disrupted and irregular sleep can have grave health effects.

As rightly said by Nathaniel Kleitman in SLEEP AND WAKEFULNESS in 1939 **“It is perhaps not sleep that needs to be explained, but wakefulness”**.

“A sleep disorder characterized by difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep; this difficulty does not occur in the context of another sleep disorder and is not etiologically linked to a mental disorder, substance use, or a general medical condition” given as definition of Insomnia stated in ICD 10 classification.¹

Few people take sleep problems as regular complaint if the sleep problem has been chronic and accept it as a part of life. Some are eager to seek medical help at the earliest but there is a part of our society which still avoids accepting sleep disturbances seriously & try ignoring to address this complaint.

Sleep is as important as diet or exercise, it should not be taken for granted as disrupted and irregular sleep can have grave health effects. Sleep centre is located in hypothalamus & wakefulness centre is located in reticular activation system in the brainstem in the brain which helps to maintain body's natural sleep-wake balance like eating, drinking etc are controlled.



Sleep is the time when body flushes out toxins and rejuvenates body so that it can work effectively during waking hours.

Normal sleep has repetitive brain wave patterns, there are two patterns:

1. NREM (non rapid eye movement sleep)
2. REM (rapid eye movement sleep)

NREM sleep occurs first and then later occurs the REM sleep. The NREM & REM sleep cycles are repeated every 70-120 minutes throughout night i.e. approximately 4-6 cycles/ night.

Stages of sleep as recognized by

characteristic polygraphic changes in EEG:

STAGE I: it is characterized by a low amplitude EEG background consisting of theta (4-7 Hz) activities.

STAGE II: it is characterized by the appearance of 12- 14 Hz sleep spindles over the central regions.

STAGE III & STAGE IV: It demonstrates progressively prominent delta activity. The two stages differ only in the proportion of slow waves in the EEG.

Sleep disorders are the most commonly encountered complaints now a days. Few reasons can be:

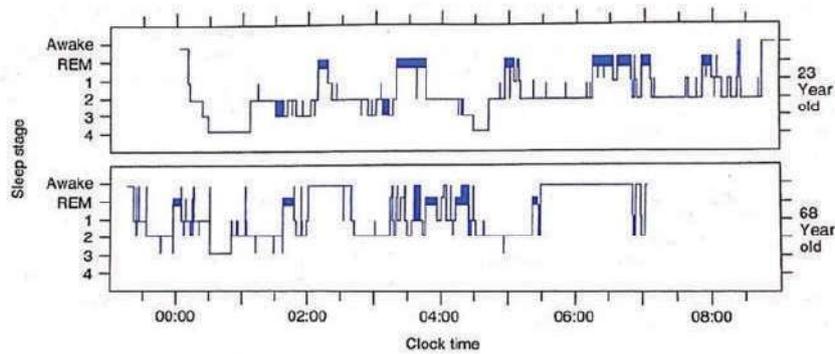


FIGURE 27-2 Plots of the stages of REM sleep (solid bars), the four stages of NREM sleep and wakefulness over the course of the entire night for representative young (upper panel, age 23) and elderly (lower panel, age 68) adult men. The recording in the elderly subject illustrates the reduction of slow-wave sleep, frequent spontaneous awakenings, early sleep onset, and early morning awakening that are characteristic features of sleep in the aged, even in the absence of specific medical or psychiatric pathology. (From the Circadian, Neuroendocrine, and Sleep Disorders Section, Endocrine Division, Brigham and Women's Hospital.)

Figure Sleep Stages: Source : Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine. 14th edition. Volume 1.

ETIOLOGY

- + Psychological causes- General anxiety, depression, phobias, panic disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, PTSD
- + Neurological causes- Parkinsonism, Dementia, Alzheimer's, Epilepsy, Tumors, Stroke
- + Drug and substance abuse- Alcohol, Tobacco, Caffeine, Steroids, Stimulants,
- + Secondary to other illness - Thyroid disease, GERD, IBS,

- Diabetes, Heart failure, Angina, Arthritis, Fibromyalgia, COPD, Asthma
 - + Lifestyle changes – Increased stress, Changing eating habits- heavy meals, new relationships, new roles in life
- So when addressing a case of sleep disorder it's important to first ascertain the cause, rule out and address causes and then move ahead.
- NARCOLEPSY:** Narcolepsy is a chronic neurological disorder involving the loss of the brain's ability

to regulate sleep-wake cycles. Symptoms include excessive daytime, sleepiness as compared to those who don't have narcolepsy feel after 24-48 hours of sleep deprivation as well as disturbed sleep which is often confused with insomnia.

Another representation of narcolepsy is cataplexy which is a sudden and transient episode of muscle weakness accompanied by full conscious awareness, typically triggered by emotions such as laughing, crying, terror etc. this is seen in 70% of patents who suffer from narcolepsy. ¹

Conditions for which treatment should be taken or given if observed in relation to sleeplessness:

- + Irritability
- + Lethargy and fatigue whole day
- + Short attention span
- + Weak memory
- + Having difficulty in falling asleep at night.
- + Taking long time to fall into sleep
- + Waking up frequently after sleeping and then taking long time to go back to sleep again
- + Feeling drowsy during daytime.
- + Getting Sleep while driving



- + snoring or waking up gasping for air
- + falling asleep at inappropriate situations
- + dreaming even in short sleep naps
- + irresistible movement of legs at night

Investigations

1. A **detailed sleep history**, drug history, psychiatric or psychological disorders or medical or neurological illnesses, any history of addiction are to be taken. The history should include: snoring, sleep apnoea, weeping in sleep, daytime fatigue, impaired concentration, restless legs, restlessness during sleep, childhood sleep problems, family history of sleep disorders.

2. **Sleep scales** can also be used to trace the sleep patterns & thus screen for sleep disorders:

- + The Epworth sleepiness scale
- + The fatigue severity scale
- + Beck depression inventory

3. POLYSOMNOGRAPHY:

This is an additional step which can be done in cases where medical reasons are found to be associated. There is monitoring of various physiological parameters like eye movements (EOG), ECG, EEG, EMG, oral & nasal airflow, respiration and oxygen saturation, body position, snoring.

4. **MSLT (Multiple sleep latency test)**- It is used in the evaluation of daytime sleepiness and evaluate its severity.

Management

After a detailed sleep history & relevant investigation diagnosis can be made.

Do's and Don'ts for a good sleep which can be advised to patient :

- + Follow same routine daily with

fixed sleep and wake timings.

- + Before sleep create a conducive environment with dark and quiet room
- + Develop habit of reading while retiring into bed.
- + Avoid coffee intake before sleeping.
- + Avoid using telephone 2 hours before sleeping.
- + Avoid noise in bedroom before sleeping.
- + Drink alcohol in moderation before bedtime.
- + Stop smoking
- + Stop substance abuse
- + Avoid exercising one hour before sleep

Psychological Approach

CBT and many other techniques are used to treat insomnia . sometimes six to ten sessions are enough to help treat patients.

Conventional Treatment

Drugs used are acetaminophen & diphenhydramine hydrochloride, aspirin, doxylamine succinate etc

HOMOEOPATHIC APPROACH

A detailed history shall be taken and a medicine based on totality is the best way to treat insomnia and other sleep disorders. Usually a totality based remedy will cover not just sleep concern but also other health concerns and correct the disorder. Usually it takes 3-4 weeks for medicine to start showing effect in case of sleep disturbance as per my experience.

Here are some important rubrics from Repertory for finding sleep disorders:

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - cares; from

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - cares; from - business, of

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - causeless

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - coffee - abuse of coffee agg.

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - convalescence, during

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - convulsions; with

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - abdominal complaints; from

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - afternoon

SLEEP - SLEEPLESSNESS - anxiety, from

SLEEP-ANXIOUS

SLEEP-UNREFRESHING

SLEEP-INTERRUPTED

SLEEP - FALLING ASLEEP - daytime

SLEEP - SLEEPINESS - overpowering

Few commonly indicated medicines which are specifically indicated for sleep disorder are following:

Ambra grisea : Nervous and hysterical sleeplessness, after worry in business, from sexual excitement.

Argentum metallicum : Cannot fall asleep easily, and sleep is restless; as soon as she sinks into a slumber an electric shock through the whole body.

Argentum nitricum : Kept awake by fancies and images hovering before his mind, after long, wearisome, fatiguing night-watching; short sleep, awakened often by attacks of suffocation, must rise and open window, cannot sleep on account of nervousness.

Avena Sativa

Sleeplessness, especially of

alcoholics. Bad effects of Morphine habit. Nervous states of many female troubles.

Aurum metallicum : Awake all night, no pain; no lassitude or sleepiness in the morning (Ap.); aggr. after midnight; very wakeful from great mental activity; erotic: dreams, erections and emissions arouse him from sleep.

Cannabis indica : Insomnia of drunkards with hallucinations, often of a pleasant kind; nightmare every night as soon as he falls asleep.

Capsicum annuum : Sleepless from emotions, from homesickness, from cough; screaming in sleep, which is full of dreams; restless.

Chamomilla : Sleeplessness from nervousness; from local irritations, such as worms or indigestible substances in stomach and intestines; during dentition; from hepatic disease; great restlessness; moaning, starting and tossing about; talking in sleep; irritable and peevish.

Chininum sulphuricum : Sleeplessness from overstimulation of the nervous system.

Chloralum hydratum : Insomnia from overfatigue, mental or physical; during sleep stertorous breathing, with loud snoring in any position; nightmare.

Coffea cruda : Sleeplessness from overexcitement of mind and body, from joy or agreeable surprise, from long watching, from excessive use of coffee; all the senses are more acute; persistent insomnia of children, without cause.

Gelsemium sempervirens : Insomnia from nervous irritation arising from bad or exciting news; from fright, from the anticipation of an unusual ordeal, from ovarian disease, from asthenic fevers, from chronic spinal troubles

Ignatia amara : Sleeplessness from grief, fright, from suppressed mental suffering; in children after punishment, during dentition, they waken from sleep with piercing cries and tremble all over; from hysteria.

Kaliumb romatum : Insomnia from anaemia, especially during or after acute and painful diseases.

Nux vomica : Sleeplessness caused by excessive study late at night and no exercise in daytime, hence dyspeptic insomnia, awakes tired and unrefreshed after a short morning sleep with headache.

Passiflorai narnata : Sleeplessness from nervous exhaustion, as from severe acute diseases, from mental overwork with headache.

Valeriana officinalis : Insomnia from hysteria; wakeful and restless, can only fall asleep towards morning and then is troubled with vivid dreams; nightly itching; muscular spasms; cannot sleep before midnight.

Bibliography

1. ICD 10 Classification
2. Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine. 14th edition. Volume 1
3. Textbook of Medicine – API
4. Homeopathic Therapeutics by Samuel Lilianthal

Authors:

Dr Geeta Rani Arora

BHMS, MD

Dr Arti Goyal BHMS,
MD

Dr Noorie Raghav
BHMS

HFY GROUP

PUBLICATIONS

Homoeopathy for All

- A Monthly Magazine

www.homoeopathyforall.com

email: info@homoeopathyforall.com

Advancements in

Homeopathic Research

- A Peer Reviewed Quarterly

Research Journal

www.homoejournal.com

email: info@homoejournal.com

Customer Care no.:

07217767362

207, Essel House,
10, Asaf Ali Road,
New Delhi – 110002