

Perchance to dream...

Richard Robinson discusses the homeopathic treatment of sleeping problems

A couple of months ago I saw a 29 year-old woman who had been having sleeping problems for 12 months as a result of a lot of stresses in her life, including business and financial worries which had eventually involved a court case with the Inland Revenue. She had become depressed and wanted to sleep for hours on end; she was not sleeping at night and then felt very tired in the daytime and could happily go back to bed for several hours.

She went to her GP who prescribed her the sleeping tablet, Zimovane, and when I saw her she had been on them for six months. They had helped her but when she tried to come off them her sleeping was terrible again; she would go to bed at 11pm and would get to sleep quite easily but would wake up at 3.30am and lie awake for two hours before she could get back to sleep. She didn't feel too bad when she woke up but by one o'clock in the afternoon, she said that she has absolutely had it and could quite happily go to sleep. She felt like this for the rest of the day and when she got home from work in the evening, if she sat down on the sofa she could quite easily go to sleep. She even felt like this at weekends.

Her confident, extrovert, high energy but impulsive nature, with liking a lot of stimulation and a lot going on around her was very suggestive of *Medorrhinum* and I prescribed three doses of this in high potency. When I saw her



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again three weeks later, she announced that she had “been great on those tablets”. Apparently her sleeping had returned to normal, and has been normal ever since.

Having problems sleeping, whether it is difficulty in getting off to sleep, waking up through the night, or early in the morning, is an extremely common complaint these days. If we go to our GP we will almost certainly be prescribed some type of minor

tranquilliser, which often can be helpful, but if used for anything more than a very short period of time can, as in this woman's case, create dependence, with a resulting rebound effect when the patient tries to stop the tablets, with their sleeping getting a lot worse; they have to be weaned off the tablets over a prolonged period of time.

Lifestyle changes

Simple measures to help

insomnia that patients often find helpful include not drinking tea or coffee in the evenings or stopping tea and coffee completely and changing over to one of the coffee substitutes made from cereals available from health food shops. Certain herbal teas such as lemon balm have a relaxing effect and can be helpful.

Going to bed on a full stomach is not conducive to a good night's rest and it is always best to have the evening meal at least three hours before going to bed. Eating chocolate after the evening meal can slow digestion by as much as twelve hours, but going for a walk after the meal instead helps digestion, and makes getting off to sleep easily more likely.

Some people find that reading in bed for a while before trying to get to sleep helps take the mind off the stresses of the day and helps them unwind and feel more relaxed, and if a lot of mental stress through the day has led to tension in the neck and shoulders, massaging the aching area can help.

Constitutional remedies

If these simple measures do not help, then, as always, the constitutional remedy tends to be the most effective approach. I saw a three year-old girl a while back who had had sleeping problems since birth, and her parents were at their wits' end – she would go to bed at 8.00pm and go to sleep pretty quickly, but then would wake up at 3.00am and be hysterical, crying for her mother and shouting herself hoarse – she would be wide awake and would get up and play, talk, and go into her parents' bed where she would moan and cry, fidget and kick. This would go on for about three hours, until she eventually went back off to

sleep. She would then wake up and be ready to get up at 7.30am. Not surprisingly, she would often be tired and irritable during the day, and her parents were absolutely exhausted! Her mother was a GP and had tried every possible form of treatment both behavioural and medicinal, but nothing really helped.

After taking her homeopathic history, I prescribed Pulsatilla 200c, three doses to be taken in 24 hours, and when I saw her again after two weeks she apparently has been much happier, calmer and content – she had slept well the next night after the remedy and was now sleeping through the night and waking up refreshed. Her parents said that this was the best two-week period she had had for eight months. A few weeks and another dose of the remedy later, her parents felt that both her sleeping and her general well-being were now 100 per cent.

Another patient, a 36 year-old secretary, had suffered sleeplessness since she had changed jobs one year previously. She had been working for a small family business, but was now working at the head office of a major company in a fast and furious "I want it now" atmosphere. She described the changes in working environment as "like being hit by a fast-moving train".

As a result of the stress she was having difficulty sleeping. She would go to bed at 10.30pm, but usually wouldn't get to sleep until 2.00am, and then would sometimes wake up in the night as well, and then be fully awake at 6.00am.

I took a full homeopathic history as a result of which I gave her Ignatia 1M. When I saw her again, after three

months she said that she was much, much better. After the Ignatia she had felt very emotional for a few days as is often the case as a constitutional remedy begins to get to work, and then her sleeping had been getting steadily better – she was able to get off to sleep much easier, if she did wake up in the night she would rapidly turn over and go back to sleep, and she would wake up in the morning feeling refreshed.

She was still feeling very tense and finding it difficult to relax as it was very stressful at work because her boss was about to leave – Dysco (one of the bowel nosodes) got her feeling totally back to normal, and the best she had felt since she had changed jobs one year previously.

Local remedies

These patients obviously had very severe insomnia, but often in milder cases a more locally acting remedy can be sufficient. I once had a patient from Brazil who told me that when she was growing up, her family would use local, traditional herbal remedies for many different conditions, and that the one they always used for sleeplessness was the passion-flower. As she was suffering from mild insomnia at the time, I prescribed her the passion-flower in potency – *Passiflora incarta* 30c, one to be taken one hour before going to bed, and to be repeated half-hourly if necessary if she was having trouble getting off to be sleep. Her insomnia cleared up completely.

While one doesn't have to come from Brazil to benefit from *Passiflora incarta*, most patients appear to do very well on the less exotic, but just as effective *Valeriana* 30c in the same dosage regime.

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