養和精神健康門診
HKSH Mental Health Clinic

Sleep Behaviour Disorders

During our nightly sleep, we cycle between REM (Rapid Eye Movement Sleep) and NREM (Non-Rapid Eye Movement Sleep) stages repeatedly. Certain sleep behaviour problems may occur in both stages, causing distress to patients and their families.

Patients with sleep behaviour disorders may engage in unusual physical movements or activities after falling asleep. Common manifestations include:

Sleepwalking

Sleepwalking typically occurs during the first half of the night. While patients wake up from deep sleep, get out of bed with eyes open, and appear awake, they are actually still in a sleep state. They may wander aimlessly, manipulate household objects (e.g. turning lights on and off, opening and closing doors), or mumble incomprehensibly in their sleep. Most of them eventually return to bed on their own. Since the brain is still in a sleep state, the patients have no recollection of their actions upon waking, and only come to realisation upon noticing the misplaced objects in their surroundings.

REM Sleep Behavior Disorder (RBD)

REM Sleep Behavior Disorder (RBD) typically occurs during the second half of the night, i.e. the REM sleep or dreaming stage, i.e. dreaming. They may physically act out their dreams, often accompanied by vocalisations and vigorous body movements. For example, they might punch or lash out to defend themselves from an attacker in their dream. When the dream "becomes real," this behaviour can disturb or even harm their sleeping partner.

In some cases, patients may experience significant emotional distress or have other underlying psychiatric conditions. It is recommended to seek a psychiatric evaluation if necessary.

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Patient feedback is incorporated

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