

Recognizing Dr. Ram Sharma's contribution

Dr. Ram Sharma

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Dr. Ram Abhishek Sharma, an American board-certified Psychiatrist who specializes in treating various mental health disorders in a prestigious institute on the East coast of US talks about sleep apnea and its consequences, especially mental health disorder such as dementia.

His research interests are sleep disorders in mental health, treatment resistant depression, post COVID mental health sequelae. He is currently working as an Assistant Professor and an avid researcher in the US who has authored more than 20 articles in International journals, has several poster presentations and oral talks. He has presented his original work at International and national conferences, has given oral presentations and expert talks on various topics related to mental health, including sleep disorders and its impact on mental health. His expert opinion has also been utilized by several media outlets in the US.

One of his research articles "Obstructive Sleep Apnea Severity Affects Amyloid Burden in Cognitively Normal Elderly", published in American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care, has been cited about 190 times by international researchers and has led to change in several international guidelines to promote screening of sleep apnea. This

article also served as a foundation stone for clinical trials to treat sleep apnea in an effort to delay the onset of dementia. In this article, he presented original and novel data suggesting that patients who have untreated sleep apnea are at high risk of developing abnormal proteins in their brain that can lead to dementia.

Sleep related problems have significantly increased in recent times, sleep apnea, which can lead to reduced oxygen supply to the brain, is one of the most common undetected sleep disorders and has significant impact on mental health. People who have sleep apnea often don't notice any significant symptoms in the early stages, common symptoms that people may notice is excessive snoring, multiple awakenings in the middle of the night without any reason, tiredness during the day, these symptoms are often ignored and people may suffer from this disease for several decades before they start noticing that it is affecting their memory.

Dr. Sharma mentions that his study is the first one to show that untreated sleep apnea increases the toxic proteins in the brain over the years that can lead to memory issues and dementia. Moreover, he emphasized that his research also showed that the severity of sleep apnea had a direct relationship with the amount of toxic protein build up. He explains this study utilized state of art technologies

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such as PET scan to detect these proteins.

Dr Sharma explains that memory changes secondary to sleep apnea can be reversible if treated in early stages, however if sleep apnea goes untreated for several years this may trigger the disease process of dementia which have very limited drug options to prevent further decline in memory. From his expertise, he recommends to know the risk factors of sleep apnea, it mostly affects people who are overweight, >40 yrs of age. He recommends that if patients are experiencing excessive snoring, feeling sluggish for most of the day, getting up in the middle of night for non-reason, they should discuss the possibility of sleep

apnea with their physicians, and get appropriate tests. If they have been diagnosed with this disorder, they should consider prompt treatment to avoid long term consequences which not only includes mental health disorders, such as dementia but also cardiovascular disorders such as heart attacks and stroke.

Dr. Sharma suggests CPAP is considered the best treatment options however if patients feels that it is difficult to for them to tolerate it, there are multiple other options such as dental devices, weight loss strategies to reduce the severity of sleep apnea.

