



- B.A.(Hons), M.App.Psych (Clin). University of Adelaide, South Australia
- Snr Clinical Psychologist, The Sydney Clinic, Bronte, NSW, Australia
- Director of CBTi website www.letsleephappen.com.au
- Author: "Unlearning Insomnia & Sleep Medication Dependence" CBTi workbook. LetSleepHappen Publication.
- Full member of the Clinical College of the Australian Psychological Society
- Full member of the Australasian Sleep Association
- Member of AACBT (Australian Association for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)

Rosemary Clancy

Sleep/Clinical Psychologist, Sydney Sleep Centre, Macquarie St, Sydney Australia

UNDERSTANDING SLEEP & SLEEPING PILL HABITS

Rosemary Clancy was invited to attend the “World Sleep Day” event in Malaysia and she discussed about the causality between the normal sleep cycle and the sleeping pill habit. According to her, in Australia, there is a BEACH study of actual prescribing by doctors. 90% of Australian with insomnia left their GPs with a hypnotic prescription – a sleeping pill prescription.

Malcolm Lader from Kings College Addiction Research Centre in London, UK said, there’s difficulties in preventing short-term sleeping pills used from extending indefinitely. Patient settled on a dose, and a patient will be remained there for months, years or decades. Thus, she suggested that we all don’t take these every day, only when you need them.

Normal sleep gets misinterpreted by us easily, we distrust our brain and move towards sleeping pills. In 70 – 90 minutes cycles through the night, we move in and out of these sleep stages - REM and NonREM. REM is dream sleep. NonREM sleep stages, NREM3 is deep sleep or Slow-Wave sleep, NREM1 and 2 are light sleep.

Deep sleep NREM3 in the first half, It’s 13 – 23% of night sleep. Dream sleep or REM sleep, you can see it’s about 20% and more in the second half. Then, light sleep in stage 1 and 2 covers a 60% of the night sleep. So many has suffered, don’t like the deep sleep as proximately 20% of the night, people want 80% or 90% of deep sleep through the night.

In insomnia, we have biased recall waking during the night. We think waking is longer and sleep is shorter. All the major sleeping pill manufacturers warned consumers of memory lost side-effect. Even Merck, manufacturer of the new orexin sleep medication Suvorexant, warns of memory loss. Intergrated, amnesia is disrupted, laying down of new memory. In insomnia, we recall and judge, a wait-time has been longer than it is, and the medication disrupted that recall. Problem solved! Problem not solved, it’s just the beginning.

When sunlight hits our natural nerve through our eyes and passes through the SCN, a little wake-up clock kept in the brain, melatonin sleep hormone is suppressed, core body temperature increases, and sleep is over. The Sun not only stops our sleeping, but it starts our sleep the next night. When our serotonin (mood) neurotransmitter is changed by the pineal gland into melatonin sleep hormone, your brain and body will only allow sleep when it’s safe to do so.

Try to control sleep and make it happen, all we see the problem and we try to use it less to stop tolerance. But this means, saving the medication for 1 – 2 nights a week, how to decide? Best case scenario is careful calculation and sleeping pills use habit less often but long-term. The antidote to this problem is education about sleep on what’s normal variation in sleep.

