

Editorial

In the past 20 years sleep medicine has taken giant leaps, yet sleep-disordered breathing continues to be significantly underdiagnosed and undertreated in primary care. This special edition of the Bombay Hospital Journal is dedicated to sleep medicine in primary care.

On speaking with primary care physicians and general physicians, we noticed a lot of issues they faced, right from recognising the sleep apnoeic more often, to taking a sleep history, to interpreting a report, to discussing management with the patient. We have tried to make this issue as practical-oriented as possible, yet also focussing on parasomnias and the importance of when to refer to a chest physician or dedicated sleep specialist.

The number of dedicated sleep specialists in Mumbai could probably be counted on the fingers at one hand. With

the current estimated incidence of approximately 4% of males and 2.5% of females in the age group above 40, these few specialists will never be able to look after all sleep apnoeics and patients with sleep-disordered breathing in Mumbai city itself.

Added to that, the problem of insomnia which often needs psychiatric and psychologist consults - our patients are often hard-pressed to visit such specialists in a hurry. Hence the importance of the primary care physician helping to treat such conditions too - at least with important basic advice at the outset - to spare many from the harmful effects of hypnotic sedative abuse.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed writing it, with a dedicated team of consultants and associates from the Bombay Hospital respiratory and ENT departments.

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