An Epidemic of Dream Deprivation: Unrecognized Public Health Hazard Accompanies Sleep Loss

UA Center for Integrative Medicine faculty and sleep specialist Dr. Rubin Naiman has published a comprehensive review of data about the causes, extent and consequences of dream loss, with recommendations for restoring healthy dreaming, in the August 2017 issue of the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences.

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TUCSON, Ariz. – A silent epidemic of dream loss is at the root of many of the health concerns attributed to sleep loss, according to Rubin Naiman, PhD, faculty at the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, who has published a comprehensive review of data in the August 2017 issue of the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences.

"Dreamless: the silent epidemic of REM sleep loss" details the various factors that cause rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and dream loss. Typical sleep follows a pattern in which deeper, non-REM sleep is prioritized by the body. Only later in the night and into the early morning do people experience dreaming, during REM sleep.

"We are at least as dream-deprived as we are sleep-deprived," noted Dr. Naiman, clinical assistant professor of medicine and the sleep and dream specialist at the UA Center for Integrative Medicine. He sees REM/dream loss as an unrecognized public health hazard that silently wreaks havoc by contributing to illness, depression and an erosion of consciousness. "Many of our health concerns attributed to sleep loss actually result from REM sleep deprivation."

The review examines data about the causes and extent of REM/dream loss associated with medications, substance use disorders, sleep disorders and behavioral and lifestyle factors. Dr. Naiman further reviews the consequences of REM/dream loss and concludes with recommendations for restoring healthy REM sleep and dreaming.

For more information about Dr. Naiman’s research, visit drnaiman.com.

For more information about the Integrative Health and Lifestyle program (IHeLp) taught by Dr. Naiman at the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, visit azcim.org/ihelp.

About the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine

The University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine (UACIM) is leading the transformation of health care by creating, educating and actively supporting a community that embodies the philosophy and practice of healing-oriented medicine. UACIM is internationally recognized for its evidence-based clinical practice, innovative educational programs and research that substantiates the field of integrative medicine and influences public policy. Since its creation in 1994, the Center’s vision of making integrative care available to all is being realized worldwide: Center graduates now are guiding more than one million patients to take a greater role in their health and
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