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Dreams and their role in homeopathy

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Abstract

The science of homeopathy is based on individualization. Homeopaths form their prescription based on holistic approach with due considering the individuality of the patient; and not just by mere focusing on their chief complains. To understand a person better, in present scenario where a human being is habituated to mask their feelings in order to survive in the surroundings, homeopaths need information that has not been compensated and can be used to understand the patient's psyche. Dreams provide such information about a patient's psyche that bypass compensation which we can use to prescribe a most similar remedy to the patient.

This article is based on the information about the dreams and its impact on human health and its utility in homoeopathic prescription. Although this is a very vast domain and should be studied in deep; but it is just an effort to start the exploration. Hope this article will open several pathways to initiate research studies in future.

Keywords: Dreams, health, homeopathy, homoeopathic medicines, psychology, sleep

Introduction

A dream is a succession of images, emotions, visions, ideas and sensations that takes place in mind during various stages of sleep. The scientific study of dreams is called Oneirology^[1].

For many years scientists, philosophers and religious scholars have been trying to understand the phenomena of dreaming and what importance does it hold for the human kind. The purpose of dreams is not clearly understood and how important they are for therapeutic purpose is still a topic of debate among the scientists^[2].

Greek physician Hippocrates (c. 460-c. 377 BCE) suggested that dreams provide early evidence of disease. Father of modern psychotherapy Sigmund Freud (1900) had given an understanding that dreams are symbolic condensations of conflicts that are diverted into the subconscious from the conscious to avoid emotional distress. Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1875-1961) considered problem solving function of dreams, in which archetypal symbols represents conflicts of life and their possible solutions^[2].

Homeopathic science believes that health is the state of equilibrium between mind and body. Mind and body are dynamically interconnected and both works interdependently in the state of health^[3].

Homeopaths believe that a person consists of mind, body and a life force (vital force) and they treat patients considering the person as a whole and not just the suffering part of the body. Homeopaths base their prescription on physical as well as psychological symptoms. In fact, psychological symptoms most of the times are given primary importance in the selection of a correct medicine^[3].

"Everyone has wishes which he would not like to tell to others, which he does not want to admit even to himself."

-Sigmund Freud, Dream Psychology: Psychoanalysis for beginners

In homeopathy dreams are very important because dreams are the reflection of the unconscious mind. They are the reflection of the hidden desires and aversions and the innermost turmoil. Hence, they can prove to be of great importance in homeopathic prescribing. Kent's repertory is based on the philosophy of Generals to particulars. Dreams are considered general symptoms in homeopathy according to Dr Kent; which help to find the most suitable remedy to a patient^[4].

The mechanism of dreaming

The scientific study of dreams as a neurocognitive process was initiated after the discovery of REM sleep in the early 1950s and NREM sleep in the 1960s.

In general, sleep is divided into two phases

1. Rapid eye movement-REM sleep
2. Non rapid eye movement-NREM sleep

Dreams are associated with REM sleep

The body and brain are in a unique state during REM sleep. The eyes move back and forth under closed lids, hence the name REM sleep. EEG waves during REM sleep are in many ways similar to those during the awake state. At the same time the major muscles of the body are in atonic state so that the person who is dreaming may not harm himself^[5].

Understanding the dreams and their utility in homeopathy

Understanding the essence of dreams will reveal the state of a patient's mind. An individual experiences the whole world while he is awake. During this time, he gathers various stimuli, various experiences; he expresses his mind and forms his psyche^[6].

State of deep sleep is provided by nature for rest. So it can be called as a state of nothingness. But the human mind allows conflicts to enter into this state and these conflicts are expressed in dreams, the mid state between waking and deep sleep. These conflicts and experiences are important to understand the personal growth of a patient^[7].

Freud found that a therapist may be able to identify a patient's affective memories (e.g., traumatic experiences) via emotional material in dream content. He realized that dream content is derived from life but is not identical to life. He suggested that some transformations and connections must exist between these materials. These connections are not random but rather formed by a person's unconscious desires^[8].

He stated that, "a dream is the fulfillment of a wish." He believed that dreams can disguise their true purpose and the goal of dream interpretation is to reveal the true purpose of dreaming so that we can understand a lot about a dreamer^[8].

Domhoff has stated

"Dreams are very 'revealing' of what is on our minds. We have shown that seventy five to one hundred dreams from a person give us a very good psychological portrait of that individual. Give us a thousand dreams over a couple of decades and we can give you a profile of the person's mind that is almost as individualized and accurate as her or his fingerprints"^[9].

"This whole creation is essentially subjective, and the dream is the theater where the dreamer is at once: scene, actor, prompter, stage manager, author, audience, and critic."

Carl Jung: General Aspects of Dream Psychology^[10].

As stated before, in homeopathy understanding a patient's psyche is very important as the homeopathic system of medicine is based on individualization. According to homeopathic theory of individualization, no two persons are alike. So the medicine prescribed to any individual will be based upon his or her individuality. Hence the homeopathic prescription will differ from person to person even though the disease condition is same^[3].

Dreams can be very useful for a homeopath as dreams are the reflection of the unconscious, they bypass compensations and a homeopath can understand a patient's state better by interpreting dreams which he or she would not be otherwise able to share^[11].

Dreams can also reveal psychic make up of children who are old enough to retell their dreams but not yet intellectually capable of answering more detailed questions regarding their mental state^[12].

Although there have been many researches done on dream interpretation in psychotherapy as well as homeopathy, it is still a topic of debate among people whether this practice has therapeutic value or not^[13].

Some believe in the therapeutic utility of dream interpretation while others believe that we cannot rely so much on the information given by the patients of their dreams along with this, chances of bias from the interpreter's side also contribute to error in understanding the true meaning behind a dream which can ultimately lead to a major failure^[13].

Conclusion

While many homeopaths have contributed a great deal on dream interpretation and its importance in homeopathy, there is so much work that needs to be done on this topic by homeopaths so that future homeopaths will be accustomed to consider dreams as a useful asset in understanding a patient's individuality in their day-to-day practice.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

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