



## **Dreams in medical psychotherapy – new perspectives**

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**Objective:** The sensations and emotions of high intensity perceived during sleep could have a direct influence on the initiation and exacerbation or regression of somatic or psychic disorders. This leads to a renewed approach where dreams, instead of being used exclusively in the psychiatric practice with the usual symbolic interpretations, are used more directly even in clinical medical practice.

**Methods:** This new approach has been explored in an intervision group regularly gathering psychiatrists and internists for more than 13 years. As a result of the experience the Swiss Society of Medical Oneirology was founded in 2011.

**Results:** The dream activity raises the issue about our two personalities: homo diurnus and homo nocturnus which seem to be two dynamically interacting, separate but co-existing entities of high value of which one is predominating during day-light and the other one is more present when we sleep. The recalled oneiric images could be reconverted into original sensations and emotions thus providing possible information about changes occurring in the patient's inner world. This replaces the tradition of revealing the unconscious and setting it in perspective to a mentalised approach to the patient's past. The dream experience may not be accepted by the patient, as it can be very different from his everyday life experience. Even so, some important clinical changes may occur later as an unexpected therapeutic response.

**Conclusion:** The goal is to highlight the emotional content of significant dream memories – together with the patient, in order to find possible links and to monitor the outcome of disease. Taking dreams into consideration opens up new horizons in every doctor-patient relationship.

**Keywords:** dream; emotion and sensation; diurnal and nocturnal personality; medical psychotherapy