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Management of REM sleep behavior disorder: an American Academy of Sleep Medicine clinical practice guideline

Michael Howell, MD¹; Alon Y. Avidan, MD, MPH²; Nancy Foldvary-Schaefer, DO, MS³; Roneil G. Malkani, MD^{4,5}; Emmanuel H. Doring, MD^{6,7}; Joshua P. Roland, MD^{8,9}; Stuart J. McCarter, MD¹⁰; Rochelle S. Zak, MD¹¹; Gerard Carandang, MS¹²; Uzma Kazmi, MPH¹²; Kannan Ramar, MD, MBBS¹³

¹Department of Neurology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

²David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

³Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine, Cleveland, OH

⁴Department of Neurology, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL

⁵Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Chicago, IL

⁶Department of Neurology, Division of Movement Disorders, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY

⁷Department of Medicine, Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care & Sleep Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY

⁸Thirty Madison, New York, NY

⁹Department of Pulmonology, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

¹⁰Department of Neurology, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, MN

¹¹Sleep Disorders Center, University of California, San Francisco, CA

¹²American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Darien, IL

¹³Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Center for Sleep Medicine, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN

Address correspondence to: Michael Howell, MD, Department of Neurology, University of Minnesota, 516 Delaware St SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; Email: howel020@umn.edu

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The development of this paper was funded by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Dr. Ramar served on the AASM Board of Directors. Mr. Carandang and Ms. Kazmi are employed by the AASM. Dr. Howell serves as a consultant and co-owner for the Sleep Performance Institute, which provides sleep wellness education sessions to organizations. He does not get paid for any speaking engagements and receives no royalties.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: This guideline establishes clinical practice recommendations for the management of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep behavior disorder in adults.

Methods: The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) commissioned a task force of experts in sleep medicine to develop recommendations and assign strengths based on a systematic review of the literature and an assessment of the evidence using Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) methodology. The task force provided a summary of the relevant literature and the certainty of evidence, the balance of benefits and harms, patient values and preferences, and resource use considerations that support the recommendations. The AASM Board of Directors approved the final recommendations.

Good Practice Statement: The following good practice statement is based on expert consensus, and its implementation is necessary for appropriate and effective management of patients with REM sleep behavior disorder (RBD):

It is critically important to help patients maintain a safe sleeping environment to prevent potentially injurious nocturnal behaviors. In particular, the removal of bedside weapons, or objects that could inflict injury if thrown or wielded against a bed partner, is of paramount importance. In all cases, sharp furniture like nightstands, should be moved away or their edges and headboard be padded. To reduce the risk of injurious falls, a soft carpet, rug or mat should be placed next to the bed. Patients with severe, uncontrolled RBD should be recommended to sleep separately from their partners, or at the minimum, to place a pillow between themselves and their partner.

Recommendations: The following recommendations, with medications listed in alphabetical order, are a guide for clinicians in choosing a specific treatment for RBD in adults. Each recommendation statement is assigned a strength (“strong” or “conditional”). A “strong” recommendation (i.e., “We recommend...”) is one that clinicians should follow under most circumstances. A “conditional” recommendation (i.e., “We suggest...”) is one that requires that the clinician use clinical knowledge and experience, and to strongly consider the patient’s values and preferences to determine the best course of action.

Adult patients with isolated RBD

1. * The AASM suggests that clinicians use clonazepam (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)
2. * The AASM suggests that clinicians use immediate-release melatonin (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)
3. * The AASM suggests that clinicians use pramipexole (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)
4. The AASM suggests that clinicians use transdermal rivastigmine (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). (CONDITIONAL)

Adult patients with secondary RBD due to medical condition

5. * The AASM suggests that clinicians use clonazepam (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults. (CONDITIONAL)
6. * The AASM suggests that clinicians use immediate-release melatonin (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults. (CONDITIONAL)
7. The AASM suggests that clinicians use transdermal rivastigmine (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition (Parkinson’s disease) in adults. (CONDITIONAL)
8. * The AASM suggests that clinicians **not** use deep brain stimulation (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Adult patients with drug-induced RBD

9. * The AASM suggests that clinicians use drug discontinuation (versus drug continuation) for the treatment of drug-induced RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

* Recommendations include remarks listed below that provide additional context to guide clinicians with implementation.

Keywords: REM sleep, REM sleep behavior disorder, parasomnia, dream enactment, sleep disorder, narcolepsy, Parkinson's disease, dementia with Lewy bodies

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INTRODUCTION

This clinical practice guideline updates the previously published American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) Best Practice Guide on the treatment of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep behavior disorder¹ and reflects the current recommendations of the AASM.

Under normal physiological conditions REM sleep is characterized by dream mentation combined with skeletal paralysis. This REM atonia is lost in REM sleep behavior disorder (RBD), resulting in individuals acting out their dreams with potentially violent and injurious behaviors. RBD can have significant consequences on quality of life including the risk of injury to patients and bed partners.

In 2010, the AASM published a best practice guide for the treatment of RBD.¹ Without placebo-controlled studies for guidance, a consensus was formed based upon case series and small uncontrolled clinical trials. Since 2010 several clinical trials have been conducted regarding the management of RBD among patients with isolated (or idiopathic) RBD (iRBD), RBD secondary to a medical disorder, (most commonly the alpha-synuclein pathologies of Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB), Parkinson's disease (PD) and Multiple System Atrophy (MSA) and drug induced/exacerbated RBD (most commonly SSRIs). This expansion of the literature on RBD management substantially informed the task force in crafting the clinical practice guideline (CPG).

This guideline, in conjunction with the accompanying systematic review,² provides a comprehensive update of the available evidence and a synthesis of clinical practice recommendations for the treatment of RBD.

It is intended to optimize patient-centric care by informing clinicians who care for patients with RBD. This clinical practice guideline provides practice recommendations for the management of RBD, by identifying treatments that are most effective in specific circumstances (isolated RBD, secondary RBD, drug induced/exacerbated RBD). However, we recognize that patients often do not segregate neatly across these conditions. Further, a significant degree of overlap frequently occurs, patients may move from one category to another, and appropriate treatments may change or emerge over time. Finally, this guideline provides advice for the counseling and disclosure of neurodegenerative risk for patients with RBD.

The following clinical practice recommendations are based on a systematic review and evaluation of evidence using the GRADE process. The recommendations reflect only those interventions for which there was sufficient evidence to make a recommendation. Interventions for which literature was reviewed but it was determined insufficient evidence existed to make a recommendation are discussed in the systematic review. "Insufficient evidence" to determine effectiveness of a particular intervention does not mean that the intervention does not provide benefit, but that evidence is lacking to guide decision-making. Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of these interventions.

METHODS

The AASM commissioned a task force (TF) of sleep medicine clinicians with expertise in RBD. The TF was required to disclose all potential conflicts of interest (COI), per the AASM's COI policy, prior to being appointed to the TF and throughout the research and writing of these documents. In accordance with the AASM's COI policy, TF members with a level 1 conflict were not allowed to participate. TF members with a level 2 conflict were required to recuse themselves from any related discussion or writing responsibilities. All relevant conflicts of interest are listed in the Disclosures section.

The TF conducted a systematic review of the published scientific literature, focusing on patient-oriented, clinically relevant outcomes. The key terms, search limits, and inclusion/exclusion criteria specified by the TF are detailed in the supplemental material of the accompanying systematic review.² The purpose of the review was to determine

whether the interventions provided clinically significant improvements in relevant outcomes relative to no treatment. The TF then developed clinical practice recommendations according to the GRADE process.^{3, 4} The TF assessed the following four components to determine the direction and strength of a recommendation: 1) certainty of evidence, 2) balance of beneficial and harmful effects, 3) patient values and preferences, and 4) resource use. Details of these assessments can be found in the accompanying systematic review. Taking these major factors into consideration, each recommendation statement was assigned a strength (“Strong” or “Conditional”). Additional information is provided in the form of “Remarks” immediately following the recommendation statements, when deemed necessary by the TF. Remarks are based on the evidence evaluated during the systematic review and are intended to provide context for the recommendations and to guide clinicians in the implementation of the recommendations in daily practice.

This clinical practice guideline reflects the evidence and state of knowledge at the time of the last literature search. Scoping literature searches are performed on all published AASM clinical practice guidelines on an annual basis to review new evidence. Based on this review, updates may be made if there are significant changes in areas such as the available interventions, outcomes of interest (or values placed on outcomes) or evidence on the existing benefits and harms.

GOOD PRACTICE STATEMENT

The following good practice statement is based on expert consensus, and its implementation is necessary for appropriate and effective management of patients with RBD.

It is critically important to help patients maintain a safe sleeping environment to prevent potentially injurious nocturnal behaviors. In particular, the removal of bedside weapons, or objects that could inflict injury if thrown or wielded against a bed partner, is of paramount importance. In all cases, sharp furniture like nightstands, should be moved away or their edges and headboard be padded. To reduce the risk of injurious falls, a soft carpet, rug or mat should be placed next to the bed. Patients with severe, uncontrolled RBD should be recommended to sleep separately from their partners, or at the minimum, to place a pillow between themselves and their partner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this guideline were formulated to meet the needs of most patients in most situations. A “Strong” recommendation is one that clinicians should follow for almost all patients (i.e., something that might qualify as a Quality Measure). A “Conditional” recommendation reflects a lower degree of certainty in the appropriateness of the patient-care strategy for all patients. A conditional recommendation requires that the clinician use clinical knowledge and experience and strongly consider the individual patient’s values and preferences to determine the best course of action. The ultimate judgment regarding any specific care must be made by the treating clinician and the patient, taking into consideration the individual circumstances of the patient, available treatment options, and resources. The AASM expects this guideline to have an impact on professional behavior, patient outcomes, and—possibly—health care costs.

The following clinical practice recommendations are based on a systematic review and evaluation of evidence using the GRADE process. The implications of the strength of recommendations for guideline users are summarized in **Table 1**. **Table 2** summarizes the recommendations for interventions in adult populations.

The task force identified studies reporting evidence for clonazepam, melatonin, and sodium oxybate in the treatment of pediatric patients. However, there was insufficient and inconclusive evidence to make specific treatment

recommendations for isolated RBD, secondary RBD due to medical condition, and drug-induced RBD in pediatric populations.

TABLE 1 – Implications of Strong and Conditional Recommendations for Users of AASM Clinical Practice Guidelines

Strong Recommendation “We recommend...”	–	Almost all patients should receive the recommended course of action. Adherence to this recommendation could be used as a quality criterion or performance indicator.
Conditional Recommendation “We suggest...”	–	Most patients should receive the suggested course of action; however, different choices may be appropriate for different patients. The clinician must help each patient determine if the suggested course of action is clinically appropriate and consistent with their values and preferences.

The ultimate judgment regarding the suitability of any specific recommendation must be made by the clinician and the patient.

TABLE 2 - Summary of Recommended Interventions in Adult Populations

Intervention	Strength of recommendation	Critical Outcomes Showing Clinically Significant Improvement*		
		RBD Symptoms	RBDQ score [†] (behavioral)	RBD frequency ^Ω
ISOLATED RBD				
Clonazepam	Conditional For	✓	✓	
Melatonin (immediate-release)	Conditional For	✓		✓
Pramipexole	Conditional For	✓		✓
Rivastigmine	Conditional For			✓
SECONDARY RBD DUE TO MEDICAL CONDITION				
Clonazepam	Conditional For	✓		
Melatonin (immediate-release)	Conditional For	✓		✓
Rivastigmine	Conditional For			✓
Deep Brain Stimulation	Conditional Against	X		
DRUG-INDUCED RBD				
Drug Discontinuation	Conditional For	✓		

*✓Critical outcomes showing clinically significant improvement. X Critical outcomes not showing clinically significant improvement.

Blank = No reported data for this critical outcome. RBDQ = RBD Questionnaire

[†] RBDQ = RBD Questionnaire (includes Korean, Japanese, and Hong Kong versions)

^Ω RBD frequency = the rate of RBD symptoms over a period of time

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULT POPULATIONS

The following are recommendations for the treatment of adults with isolated RBD, secondary RBD due to medical condition, and drug-induced RBD. Remarks are provided to guide clinicians in the implementation of these recommendations.

Isolated RBD

Recommendations with sufficient evidence for specific interventions for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults are presented below. However, there was insufficient and inconclusive evidence to make recommendations for prolonged-release melatonin, ramelteon, sodium oxybate, paroxetine, and yi-gan san. In addition, zopiclone and agomelatine are not available or Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved for use in the United States, so no recommendations for these interventions were made. A summary of the evidence for each intervention can be found in the accompanying systematic review.²

Recommendation 1: The AASM suggests that clinicians use clonazepam (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: The age of the patient should be considered in the use and dosing of clonazepam as older patients may be more sensitive to sedating side effects of clonazepam and take longer to metabolize and eliminate the benzodiazepine.

The TF assessed whether clonazepam was effective for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes and treatment-related worsening in sedation or cognitive impairment. The TF identified 50 observational studies assessing efficacy of clonazepam in patients with isolated RBD. These studies demonstrated clinically significant improvements in behavioral factor RBD Questionnaire (RBDQ) score.

The overall certainty of evidence was low due to risk of bias associated with observational studies. Across all included studies reporting the use of clonazepam (irrespective of the indication), commonly reported adverse events included daytime sleepiness, dizziness, cognitive impairment, and postural instability. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the benefits of clonazepam use in patients outweighed the risks and adverse events and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of clonazepam. The costs of the medication are relatively small compared to the potential high cost of injury due to dream enactment. The majority of patients would most likely use clonazepam compared to no treatment for their isolated RBD.

Recommendation 2: The AASM suggests that clinicians use immediate-release melatonin (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: As melatonin is not FDA-regulated in the United States and several other jurisdictions, different formulations could potentially lead to varying efficacy between different melatonin brands. Melatonin labels with the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) Verification Mark have been confirmed to contain the amounts of melatonin stated on the label and may provide the most consistent dosing among currently available melatonin treatment options.

The TF assessed whether immediate-release melatonin was effective for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes and treatment-related worsening in sedation or cognitive impairment. The TF identified 1 randomized controlled trial and 9 observational

studies which assessed efficacy of immediate-release melatonin in patients with isolated RBD. These studies demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD dream enactment and vocalization episode frequency.

The overall certainty of evidence was low due to imprecision and risk of bias associated with observational studies. Across all included studies reporting the use of immediate-release melatonin (irrespective of the indication), commonly reported adverse events included daytime sleepiness, headache, trouble thinking, and nausea. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the benefits of immediate-release melatonin use in patients outweighed the risks and adverse events and the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is strongly in favor of immediate-release melatonin. The costs of the medication are relatively small compared to the potential high cost of injury due to dream enactment during sleep. The vast majority of patients would most likely use immediate-release melatonin compared to no treatment for their isolated RBD.

Recommendation 3: The AASM suggests that clinicians use pramipexole (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: Pramipexole appears to be most effective among patients with RBD with elevated periodic limb movements noted on polysomnography (PSG) suggesting its efficacy may be secondary to addressing ancillary motor activity.

The TF assessed whether pramipexole was effective for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes. The TF identified 7 observational studies assessing efficacy of pramipexole in patients with isolated RBD. These studies demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD frequency and simple/complex motor behavior frequency.

The overall certainty of evidence was very low due to imprecision and risk of bias associated with observational studies. Across all included studies reporting the use of pramipexole (irrespective of the indication), commonly reported adverse events included next-day hangover, gastrointestinal symptoms, and negative impulsive behavior. In addition, use of daily pramipexole in individuals with restless legs syndrome (RLS) can result in augmentation of RLS symptoms over time. The TF determined that the benefits of pramipexole use in patients outweighed the risks and adverse events and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of pramipexole. The costs of the medication are relatively small compared to the potential high cost of injury due to dream enactment during sleep. The majority of patients would most likely use pramipexole compared to no treatment for their isolated RBD.

Recommendation 4: The AASM suggests that clinicians use transdermal rivastigmine (versus no treatment) for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). (CONDITIONAL)

The TF assessed whether rivastigmine was effective for the treatment of isolated RBD in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes and treatment-related worsening in sedation or cognitive impairment. The TF identified 1 randomized controlled trial assessing efficacy of transdermal rivastigmine in patients with RBD and mild cognitive impairment and were refractory to conventional therapy. This study demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD frequency.

The overall certainty of evidence was moderate due to imprecision. Across all included studies reporting the use of rivastigmine (irrespective of the indication), the most common adverse events leading to withdrawal were hypotension and asthenia; other commonly reported adverse events included daytime sleepiness and nausea. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the benefits of rivastigmine use in patients with mild cognitive impairment outweighed the risks and adverse events and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of rivastigmine. The costs of the medication are relatively small compared to the potential high

cost of injury due to dream enactment during sleep. The majority of RBD patients with MCI would most likely use rivastigmine compared to no treatment for their isolated RBD.

Secondary RBD due to Medical Condition

Recommendations with sufficient evidence for specific interventions for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults are presented below. Alpha-synuclein pathological neurological disorders, in particular dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB) and Parkinson's disease (PD) are the most common associated conditions with RBD and, as such, were the most common associated conditions reported by studies that were reviewed by the TF. The TF considered separate recommendations for individual disorders; however, treatment data was lacking for specific conditions as most studies aggregated patient populations. There was insufficient and inconclusive evidence to make recommendations for prolonged-release melatonin, ramelteon, pramipexole, rotigotine, carbidopa-levodopa, ramelteon, sodium oxybate, positive airway pressure (PAP) therapy, donepezil, yi-gan san, memantine, IV immunoglobulin, cannabidiol, and light therapy among individuals with RBD due to a medical condition. In addition, zopiclone, tiapride, and nelotanserin are not available or FDA-approved for use in the United States, so no recommendations for these interventions were made. A summary of the evidence for each intervention can be found in the accompanying systematic review.²

Recommendation 5: The AASM suggests that clinicians use clonazepam (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: The nature of the patient's medical condition, their age, and risk for clonazepam-induced sedation and imbalance should be considered in the use and dosing of clonazepam. Older patients may be more sensitive to sedating side effects of clonazepam and take longer to metabolize and eliminate the benzodiazepine.

The TF assessed clonazepam as a treatment of secondary RBD due to a medical condition in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes and treatment-related worsening in sedation or cognitive impairment. The TF identified 1 randomized controlled trial and 38 observational studies assessing efficacy of clonazepam in patients with secondary RBD due to a medical condition, most commonly PD, but also DLB. These studies demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD symptoms.

The overall certainty of evidence was low due to risk of bias associated with observational studies. Across all studies reporting the use of clonazepam (irrespective of the indication), commonly reported adverse events included daytime sleepiness, dizziness, and postural instability. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the benefits of clonazepam use in patients outweighed the risks and adverse events and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of clonazepam. The costs of the medication are relatively small compared to the potential high cost of injury due to dream enactment. The majority of patients would most likely use clonazepam compared to no treatment for their secondary RBD due to medical condition.

Recommendation 6: The AASM suggests that clinicians use immediate-release melatonin (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: As melatonin is not FDA-regulated in the United States and several other jurisdictions, different formulations could potentially lead to varying efficacy between different melatonin brands. Melatonin labels with the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) Verification Mark have been confirmed to contain the amounts of melatonin stated on the label and may provide the most consistent dosing among currently available melatonin treatment options.

The TF assessed whether immediate-release melatonin was effective for the treatment of secondary RBD due to a medical condition in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes. The TF identified 1 randomized controlled trial and 9 observational studies assessing efficacy of immediate-release melatonin in patients with secondary RBD due to medical condition, most commonly Parkinson's disease. These studies demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD dream-acting and vocalization episode frequency.

The overall certainty of evidence was low due to imprecision and risk of bias associated with observational studies. Across all studies reporting the use of immediate-release melatonin (irrespective of the indication), commonly reported adverse events included daytime sleepiness, headache, trouble thinking, and nausea. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the benefits of immediate-release melatonin use in patients outweighed the risks and adverse events and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of immediate-release melatonin. The costs of the medication are relatively small compared to the potential high cost of injury due to dream enactment during sleep. The vast majority of patients would most likely use immediate-release melatonin compared to no treatment for their secondary RBD due to medical condition.

Recommendation 7: The AASM suggests that clinicians use transdermal rivastigmine (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition (Parkinson's disease) in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

The TF assessed whether rivastigmine was effective for the treatment of secondary RBD due to a medical condition in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes. The TF identified 1 randomized controlled trial testing transdermal rivastigmine assessing efficacy of rivastigmine in patients with secondary RBD due to a medical condition, in this case PD. This study demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD episode frequency.

The overall certainty of evidence was moderate due to imprecision. Across all studies reporting the use of rivastigmine (irrespective of the indication), adverse events leading to withdrawal were hypotension and asthenia; other commonly reported adverse events included daytime sleepiness and nausea. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the benefits of transdermal rivastigmine use in patients outweighed the risks and adverse events and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of rivastigmine. The costs of the medication may be higher than clonazepam or melatonin; however, they are relatively small compared to the potential high cost of injury due to dream enactment during sleep. The majority of patients would most likely use rivastigmine compared to no treatment for their secondary RBD due to medical condition (Parkinson's disease).

Recommendation 8: The AASM suggests that clinicians not use deep brain stimulation (versus no treatment) for the treatment of secondary RBD due to medical condition in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: This recommendation is based solely on the effects of deep brain stimulation on secondary REM sleep behavior disorder. It does not apply to the use of deep brain stimulation in the treatment of motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

The TF assessed deep brain stimulation as a treatment of secondary RBD due to a medical condition in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes and treatment-related worsening in sedation or cognitive impairment. The TF identified 4 observational studies assessing efficacy of deep brain stimulation in patients with secondary RBD due to medical condition. These studies demonstrated no clinically significant improvements in RBD symptoms.

The overall certainty of evidence was low due to risk of bias associated with observational studies. Across all studies reporting the use of deep brain stimulation (irrespective of the indication), increased periodic limb movements were reported in two patients. Other commonly reported adverse events include depression, memory impairment, seizures, anxiety, agitation, confusion, dizziness, abnormal movements, pain at implant site, paresthesias, and hardware complications. Based on their clinical expertise, the TF determined that the risks and adverse events of deep brain stimulation use in patients outweighed the benefits and that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects is in favor of no treatment. The costs of deep brain stimulation surgery are high. The vast majority of patients would most likely not use deep brain stimulation for their secondary RBD due to medical condition.

Drug-induced RBD

Recommendations with sufficient evidence for specific interventions for the treatment of drug-induced RBD in adults are presented below. There was insufficient and inconclusive evidence to make a recommendation for clonazepam. A summary of the evidence for each intervention can be found in the accompanying systematic review.²

Recommendation 9: The AASM suggests that clinicians use drug discontinuation (versus drug continuation) for the treatment of drug-induced RBD in adults. (CONDITIONAL)

Remarks: Careful consideration should be given to the severity of comorbid conditions for which the inciting drug is taken, as well as the consequences of eliminating treatment, prior to drug discontinuation for drug-induced RBD in adults.

The TF assessed whether drug discontinuation was effective for the treatment of drug-induced RBD in adults based on improvements in frequency and/or intensity of dream enactment episodes. The TF identified 5 observational studies assessing efficacy of drug discontinuation in patients with drug-induced RBD. These studies demonstrated clinically significant improvements in RBD symptoms, and no comorbid disorders were reported to have worsened when the inciting drug agent was discontinued.

The overall certainty of evidence was very low due to imprecision and risk of bias associated with observational studies. The TF determined that the harmful effects of drug discontinuation may vary, based on the potential secondary effects that could be unmasked when discontinuing the drug, especially certain antidepressants. The TF concluded that the balance between the desirable and undesirable effects of stopping drug therapy may vary depending on the medication being discontinued and the type of patient population being treated. As a result, the TF concluded that the difference in resource use between drug discontinuation and no treatment may vary, due to the associated costs involved with the withdrawal of the inciting agent. Also, the TF determined that there was variability on whether patients would use drug discontinuation for their drug-induced RBD, depending on the type of drug that is being discontinued and the specific clinical scenario for the patient.

DISCUSSION

The behaviors of RBD widely vary from night to night and over time in a same individual, and between patients. Contrary to the classic descriptions of RBD necessarily causing complex dangerous dream-enactment episodes, the majority of movements in RBD are discrete and seemingly benign, and may thus remain unnoticed for months to years. These movements are small twitches and brief jerks primarily affecting the extremities, occurring every few seconds to minutes, and which may not be related to specific dream contents. However, complex and potentially

dangerous behaviors related to dream enactment can occur at any time on a given night or during the course of the disorder which can be distressing and difficult to explain to bed partners, family and clinicians. It is not unusual for patients with RBD to wonder whether they may be dealing with a psychological condition. On the contrary, research has shown that RBD manifestations and the dream mentation that patients may recall are largely independent of the individual's daytime personality.⁵ For individuals without RBD, bizarre dream mentation is masked by the REM atonia. Importantly, RBD is common, afflicting 80 million patients worldwide, with age being the greatest risk factor. Community survey data suggests that approximately 1 in 20 older individuals may have RBD.^{6,7}

Helping patients understand the nature of REM sleep and how dream enactment can be unleashed is a critical first step. Insight helps patients address the distress that can occur on awakening from a dream enactment episode and explain the nature of their condition to concerned family members, maintain treatment strategies even when dangerous dream enactment is sporadic, and adhere to long-term neurological disease monitoring.

Sleeping safely is challenging in RBD, as any patient can intermittently have violent episodes of dream enactment. It is important to secure the bedroom environment to reduce risk of injury to the patient or bedpartner such as with lowering the bed mattress, padding corners of furniture, window protection, and keeping a barrier between the patient and bedpartner in the bed or having the bedpartner sleep in a separate bed. Seemingly benign objects, such as bedside lamps, can be weaponized during dream enactment as patients may swing or hurl them across the bedroom. Of paramount importance is the removal of loaded firearms and, in particular, handguns as they can be discharged during a dream enactment episode. When violent dream enactment persists despite these interventions or in situations with a high risk for injury, pharmacotherapy can be considered. See Table 2 (Summary of Recommended Interventions).

Isolated RBD

Patients with isolated RBD have an emergence of dream enactment, along with a PSG-documented elevation in REM motor tone, in the absence of a clear underlying disorder or inciting substance or medication. Patients with isolated RBD tend to be older than individuals with drug-induced RBD or narcolepsy and younger than individuals with DLB or PD.⁸⁻¹⁰

As the natural history of RBD is typically relentless and lifelong, patients with isolated RBD can be expected to require treatment for years to decades.

We are making conditional recommendations for the use of four agents in the treatment of isolated RBD: clonazepam, immediate-release melatonin, pramipexole, and rivastigmine. Head-to-head studies comparing their effectiveness have not been performed; and thus, customizing therapy for patients is based upon each agent's unique mechanism of action, therapeutic profile and a patient's comorbidities.

As a long-acting benzodiazepine, clonazepam promotes GABAergic inhibition by increasing the frequency of chloride channel opening. It has been the most commonly prescribed medication for RBD since its efficacy was described in the original 1986 report characterizing RBD.¹¹ Clonazepam reduces dream enactment, with only minimal reduction in REM motor tone on PSG. Most patients initially respond well to low doses (0.25-1.0mg) administered at bedtime. Higher doses may be considered in the absence of response if well-tolerated. It is considered a controlled substance by most governmental regulating bodies and typically restricted to prescription only. Some patients may be hesitant to start clonazepam due to the negative stigma of benzodiazepines. Clonazepam is listed on the American Geriatrics Society Beers Criteria list of potentially inappropriate medications in older adults.¹²

Melatonin binds to the M1 and M2 receptors, suppressing REM motor tone and renormalizing other circadian features of REM sleep. Under normal physiological conditions, the duration of REM sleep episodes and the frequency of rapid eye movements (REMs index) increase over the sleep period. Both of these findings are lost in RBD as patients show no such evolution of REM sleep duration nor in the REMs index. These circadian markers

of REM sleep desynchrony along with the REM motor activity and dream enactment are improved with exogenous melatonin in patients with RBD. Consistent with melatonin's treatment of known circadian rhythm disorders, such as delayed sleep phase syndrome and jet lag, improvements in symptoms persist for several days after melatonin is discontinued but then gradually reemerge over the next several weeks.¹³ The starting dose of immediate-release melatonin (prolonged-release melatonin had insufficient evidence to make a recommendation) in isolated RBD is usually 3 mg taken at bedtime. The dose may be titrated up to address dream enactment in 3 mg increments to 15 mg; data on higher dosing are not available. Melatonin is considered a dietary supplement and available over-the-counter in the United States and Canada. However, as supplements are subject to fewer governmental regulations and scrutiny, melatonin's bioavailability and content may be less consistent across formulations, although the USP Verified Mark indicates a supplement has been verified to contain the stated dose on the package label. Melatonin requires a prescription in the European Union and United Kingdom.

Combination therapy using clonazepam and melatonin is common in clinical practice if response to monotherapy is inadequate. While there was enough evidence to make recommendations for clonazepam and melatonin monotherapies, there is a paucity of data examining combination therapies.

Pramipexole is a dopaminergic agonist typically used to treat the motor symptoms of PD, RLS and periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD). Its mechanism of efficacy in RBD is uncertain as RBD is not caused by dopaminergic dysfunction. Of note, patients with RBD who respond to pramipexole often have increased periodic limb movements on PSG; thus, it is possible that pramipexole is helping to reduce ancillary motor activity. Conversely, pramipexole may be reducing dream enactment by treating an underlying sleep fragmenting condition, PLMD.¹⁴ Dosing typically starts at 0.125 mg administered orally at bedtime and can be increased, slowly, to 2.0 mg nightly. Adverse effects of dopaminergic agonists include nausea, orthostasis, headache, daytime sleepiness, impulse control disorder and augmentation (treatment-induced worsening of RLS symptoms). Its use is restricted by most governmental regulating bodies to prescription only.

Rivastigmine is an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor that increases cholinergic effects by blocking the enzymatic degradation of acetylcholine. It has been shown to decrease the frequency of dream enactment in adults with MCI and treatment-resistant RBD.¹⁵ Rivastigmine is typically administered by transdermal patch. Dosing typically starts at 4.6 mg applied every 24 hours and can increase to 13.3 mg daily. Although rivastigmine can reduce RBD symptoms associated with MCI, its efficacy in isolated RBD without MCI is still unknown. Adverse effects of rivastigmine include skin irritation, nausea, vomiting, headache and bradycardia. Its use is restricted by most governmental regulating bodies to prescription only.

It may be expected that a patient's required dose for efficacy and the avoidance of disabling side effects will decrease over time as a function of age-related changes in drug metabolism or progression of neurologic disease. For example, a patient taking 1.0 mg of oral clonazepam at 55 years old may experience more substantial sedation at 70 years requiring a decrease to 0.5 mg. Importantly, as patients with isolated RBD are at high risk for the development of neurodegenerative disorders, most commonly DLB or PD, they require careful monitoring for cognitive, motor and autonomic deficits (see section below, "Prognosis and Counseling"). As patients with isolated RBD progress, they will often demonstrate subtle, cryptic signs that do not meet criteria for parkinsonism or cognitive impairment but nonetheless complicate medication management.^{16, 17} For example, a small degree of postural instability on examination may be unnoticed by the patient during the day but when combined with a sedating agent can lead to falls when taking a few steps to the bathroom at night.

We recognize that medication costs are often substantial and especially relevant in the setting of isolated RBD where treatment is expected to be long-term. The cost of these agents varies dramatically. Immediate-release melatonin and clonazepam are typically relatively inexpensive with increasing costs for pramipexole and rivastigmine.

Secondary RBD due to a medical condition

Patients with secondary RBD have an emergence of dream enactment, along with PSG documented elevation in REM motor tone, in the presence of a clear underlying disorder, most commonly either an alpha-synuclein disorder such as DLB/PD or in the setting of Type 1 narcolepsy (a disorder of orexin deficiency). Secondary RBD in the setting of DLB/PD is more likely to occur in older patients, while those with narcolepsy are more likely to present as young adults and adolescents.^{16, 17}

We are making conditional recommendations for the use of three agents in the treatment of secondary RBD: clonazepam, immediate-release melatonin, and rivastigmine. While each agent met a threshold for clinical significance, their comparable effectiveness is uncertain without head-to-head clinical trials.

When choosing a medication, clinicians should consider the patient's underlying disease and attendant symptoms, as patients with neurodegenerative disorders frequently experience other symptoms affecting motor function, cognitive domains, and the autonomic system (e.g., orthostatic hypotension) as well as sleep (insomnia, nocturnal episodes of confusion or hallucinations, RLS) and daytime alertness.

Concerning side effects of clonazepam include morning sedation, gait imbalance/falls, depression, and cognitive disturbances, specifically delirium and amnesia. Clonazepam can also exacerbate sleep disordered breathing. Among patients with secondary RBD and DLB, PD or other neurodegenerative disease, clonazepam is often used in lower doses, starting at 0.25 mg. However, progressive cognitive decline combined with age-related impairments in drug metabolism often leads to gradual intolerance. Additionally, the stigma of benzodiazepines may lead to a hesitancy to start clonazepam. Clonazepam is listed on the American Geriatrics Society Beers Criteria list of potentially inappropriate medications in older adults.¹²

Melatonin is an intriguing option for older patients and those with neurodegenerative disease as it is only mildly sedating. Other side effects include vivid dreams and sleep fragmentation which only rarely result in discontinuation. Dosing of immediate-release melatonin to address dream enactment in secondary RBD is similar to that in isolated RBD, starting with 3 mg and increasing by 3 mg increments to 15 mg.

Rivastigmine, an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor, is commonly employed in the treatment of DLB and PD dementia. Most notable side effects include site reaction, gastrointestinal symptoms of nausea and diarrhea, bradycardia, and based on the reviewed evidence in secondary RBD possible excessive daytime sleepiness in this patient population. Considering its indication among patients with dementia, rivastigmine may be an appropriate choice for patients with RBD and cognitive impairment refractory to other treatments.

We also chose to make a conditional recommendation against the use of Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) in the treatment of secondary RBD. DBS of the subthalamic (STN) and globus pallidus interna (GPi) nuclei is commonly employed to improve motor symptoms in PD patients. Targeting these regions has not demonstrated improved control of dream enactment among PD patients with RBD.

Of note, several treatments we reviewed were aimed at treating an underlying disease often associated with RBD. These include sodium oxybate for narcolepsy (in children and adults) and IVIG for autoimmune encephalopathy. While these therapies did not meet the threshold for recommendation therapy in this clinical practice guideline, they may be considered under the appropriate clinical context rather than solely for RBD.

Drug-Induced/Exacerbated RBD

Patients with Drug-Induced/Exacerbated RBD have an emergence of dream enactment, along with PSG documented elevation in REM motor tone, after starting or increasing a dose of medication, most commonly a serotonergic antidepressant (5-HT RBD), such as a selective serotonergic reuptake inhibitor (SSRI).⁸ Patients with 5-HT RBD are typically young adults. Along with narcolepsy, drug-induced/exacerbated RBD is the most common etiology for RBD in patients under 50 years of age.⁹

We are making a conditional recommendation for drug discontinuation in drug-induced/exacerbated RBD if it is safe to do so. Decreasing or discontinuing an SSRI may improve, but often does not fully eliminate, a patient's dream enactment, and it may take several months for improvement. In cases where dream enactment persists after discontinuing the exacerbating agent, we recommend diagnosing the patient with either isolated RBD or secondary RBD (if there is a clear underlying disorder) and treating accordingly. Among patients with 5-HT RBD who still require antidepressant therapy, many do well on an agent with a lower serotonergic profile such as bupropion.¹⁸ Changes to anti-depressant therapy should be carefully discussed with the prescribing provider. Of note, no studies investigated the time between initiation of the inciting agent and the emergence of RBD manifestations. It may be expected that RBD would emerge within a generally short time frame after initiation of an inciting agent (i.e., weeks or months, not years). The risks and benefits of discontinuing a drug known to induce RBD that has been taken uneventfully for a prolonged period of time should be carefully assessed.

Establishing Expectations

Bedpartners and family members should know that, among patients with RBD, even those on medical treatment, some degree of dream enactment and vocalization is often inevitable. Unfortunately, these behaviors can disrupt the sleep of bed partners and sleepwalking can quickly escalate to shouting expletives. However, as long as dream enactment is non-injurious, escalating pharmacotherapy is usually unwarranted as more aggressive or sedating pharmacotherapy is often futile and dangerous, increasing the risk of nighttime falls and daytime sleepiness. It is difficult to predict future sleep-related injury; therefore, ongoing monitoring is crucial to assess the severity of dream enactment and treatment efficacy, and to explore whether bed partners should be sleeping separately.

Prognosis and Counseling

One of modern medicine's most profound challenges is to help patients adapt to the ever-expanding discovery of preclinical and prodromal syndromes. The discovery that RBD is linked to neurodegenerative diseases can be anguishing for patients and families. We believe clinicians should, if the patient desires, tactfully and expeditiously discuss the relationship and provide patients with a customized risk assessment.

Inquiring about ancillary, non-sleep, symptoms linked to alpha-synuclein pathology such as hyposmia (difficulty smelling), slowed bowel motility, and orthostasis, are historical clues helpful for stratifying patient risk. When these chronic symptoms coexist with RBD they are strong predictors of phenoconversion in less than five years. Conversely, the absence of these symptoms, along with the presence of a serotonergic antidepressant (5-HT RBD) is associated with a lower risk of developing a neurodegenerative disorder in the next five years.¹⁹

Prognostic counseling for those with isolated RBD is important; however, disclosure of neurodegeneration risk presents ethical dilemmas. Disclosure may help patients plan for future, have follow-up monitoring for phenoconversion, and participate in research. However, given the current lack of neuroprotective treatments to slow or halt disease progression, disclosure may result in anxiety, depression, and even suicidality for a disease that may take years to manifest and may not occur in the patient's lifetime. On the other hand, not providing disclosure risks may harm the provider-patient relationship as patients may discover the relationship through other sources such as an internet search. Providers need to balance the ethical principles of autonomy (the patient's right to know or not know), beneficence (acting in the patient's best interest), and non-maleficence (provider's responsibility to do no harm). While there are limited data on provider practice and attitudes on disclosure, there are no data on patient attitudes in isolated RBD to guide the disclosure process. Pending such guidance, we present two general approaches, based upon the TF's unanimous consensus, below: patient-centered risk disclosure and watchful waiting.

After a diagnosis has been made the provider should explore the patient's knowledge about isolated RBD and ask the patient about their desire to know its relationship to other conditions. Depending on how much the patient wants to know, the provider can then discuss the neurodegenerative diseases, their courses and treatments, risk stratification, life planning, and establish a follow-up plan to monitor for phenoconversion.

The benefits of this approach include giving the patient time for advanced care planning, arranging care, and retirement planning. Additionally, many patients with RBD appreciate the opportunity to participate in clinical research and are empowered by contributing to the scientific search for the cure for PD (and related disorders). Sleep clinicians can facilitate research by providing patients with RBD with contact information for RBD research groups such as: the North American Prodromal Synucleinopathy (NAPS) consortium,²⁰ the Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative,²¹ and the International RBD Study Group.²² The watchful waiting approach, with temporary delay in disclosure may be appropriate in some situations, such as in the setting of severe, active psychiatric illness. This should be done on a case-by-case, patient centered basis, with the provider readdressing the topic at subsequent visits. Ultimately, clinicians need a framework to consider the ethical implications of caring for patients with prodromal neurodegenerative disease. As a model we suggest the American Academy of Neurology's position statement, Ethical Considerations in Dementia Diagnosis and Care.²³

Ultimately, clinicians can help patients view their disorder with a degree of cautious, useful, optimism. After an adjustment process the vast majority of patients with RBD handle their new prognosis well. Many patients find motivation to pursue healthy lifestyle modifications, in particular aerobic exercise, which preliminary investigations have suggested may be neuroprotective²⁴. Finally, a diagnosis of RBD itself can be a catalyst for patients to embrace life's joys and have a new-found appreciation for brain function.

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