

**AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY OF THE PREVALENCE OF VIVID  
DREAMS, NIGHTMARES AND SLEEP/NIGHT TERRORS IN PATIENTS  
WITH ADVANCED CANCER AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH OPIOID  
ANALGESICS**

**AUTHORS**

Dr Shuchita Patel BMedSci, BMBS, MSc, MRCP (UK)

StR in Palliative Medicine, Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford UK

Dr Andrew Davies MB BS, MSc, MD, FRCP

Consultant in Palliative Medicine, Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford, UK

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

Dr Shuchita Patel BMedSci, BMBS, MSc, MRCP (UK)

StR in Palliative Medicine, Royal Surrey County Hospital

Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XX. United Kingdom.

Email: shuchita.patel@nhs.net

Telephone: 01483 464885

Fax: 01483 406868

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Aim** – The aim of this study was to investigate vivid dreams, nightmares and sleep/night terrors in patients with advanced cancer.

**Methods** –The study was a multicentre, prospective observational study. Single interviews were conducted with 174 patients and data were collected on their demographics, cancer diagnosis, co-morbidities, current medication and patient's assessment of the ECOG performance status. In addition data were collected on the frequency of vivid dreams, nightmares and sleep/night terrors, as well as the patient's sleep quality and physical and psychological symptoms (Memorial Symptom Assessment Scale and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index).

**Results** – Sixty (34%) patients reported vivid dreams, 31 (18%) patients reported nightmares and 14 (8%) patients reported sleep/night terrors. Vivid dreams were associated with presence of psychological symptoms, but not physical symptoms ( $p=0.315$ ). Nightmares were associated with presence of both physical and psychological symptoms. None of these phenomena were associated with the use of opioid analgesics.

**Conclusion** - Vivid dreams are relatively common in patients with advanced cancer, although nightmares and sleep/night terrors occur less frequently in this population (and no more frequent than in the general population). Vivid dreams appear to be primarily associated with psychological problems, and so patients reporting these should be screened for psychological problems. Similarly, patients with nightmares should be screened for psychological problems, and have their physical symptoms adequately controlled.