

Until recently the nation's 27 million insomniacs had to struggle along on their own or use drugs to help them sleep. Now, the federal and state govern-

ments, plus university researchers are beginning to study the problem, hoping to find alternatives to the use of drugs.

Sleep: We don't know its purpose but try doing without it

By JEANNE WHITTAKER
There is hardly one of us who hasn't been told "a good night's sleep will do you good."

But what if a good night's sleep is something that neither time nor money can buy?

According to Dr. Robert Freedman, a psychologist at Lafayette Clinic, there are 27 million insomniacs in the U.S. who are frustrated each night. And at the present time there is no cure for their suffering except with drugs, said Freedman.

Freedman is one of several researchers trying to unlock the secrets of sleep. Some of the researchers themselves suffer from insomnia.

With funding from the Michigan Department of Public Health Office of Substance Abuse, Freedman is conducting experiments to determine what sleep is.

"That's the major problem in all of this," he said. "We don't know what sleep does, what purpose it serves. What are the functions of sleep?"

An example of a question to be answered, he noted, is what happened to prisoners of war who were deprived of sleep. Was it sleep deprivation or stress associated with the situation which caused their problems?

"We don't know," he said. Important by-products of the research, he explained, will be alternatives to the use of drugs, including Valium, which have been the primary form of treatment until now.

"Drugs work very badly," he said. "There is the possibility of drug dependence and bad side effects. They (drugs) don't improve sleep at all."

CURRENTLY, Freedman and his associate Howard Sattler are looking for men and women to be volunteers. Volunteers are paid \$10 per night to participate in the sleep study.

"We are looking for the chronic insomniac, one who takes one or more hours to fall asleep at least four times per week. We need idiopathic insomniacs who are medication free, not on alcohol, aren't heart patients, and who are willing to sleep here in the clinic for three consecutive nights."

'The difference between when I was 20 and now is that when I was younger I could turn my mind off. As the years went by I added new ideas and problems and it all piled up.'

— Sleep research volunteer

Before they are selected, potential volunteers will be asked to fill out questionnaires and undergo psychological testing. Once accepted they report to Freedman and Sattler at Lafayette Clinic where their pre-sleep waking activity and sleep are monitored in a sound proof room set aside for the tests.

While the volunteer adjusts to his surroundings he is fitted with monitoring electrodes, after which he is put to bed and told to go to sleep.

"On the first night we ask them what's going through their minds," Freedman explained. "Most of them tell us that they have a million things going through their minds and they can't turn them off."

He knows what the volunteers are talking about. As a child he suffered from a severe sleep disorder. Although occasionally he still has difficulty falling asleep, he said he has trained himself to turn off the thoughts that race through his mind preventing sleep.

"IF WE find that insomniacs are more physiologically aroused than normal sleepers, then it could help them to work on relaxation exercises. If we find that sleep is prevented by speeded up mental activity then that activity should be slowed down."

However, Freedman does not claim that involvement in the project will provide answers for the individuals who take part. The purpose of the research, he said, is to find out what is taking place in the mind and body during the process of sleep.

Two former volunteers, Rita and Mary, agree. Both took part in the program within the past six months, but were not offered treatment for their problems.

"Actually, they were only taking

down the data," said Mary. "Part of the agreement was that there would be no treatment."

Rita recalls that an osteopath suggested she volunteer for the experiment.

"You get comfortable, get into your night clothes. They don't tell you very much. Everything is buggy," she related.

"After two hours I yelled for help. They told me they wouldn't hold me against my will. After that I went to sleep very quickly."

"I don't think it resolved anything."

ALTHOUGH THEY never met, the two women's experiences were very similar.

Both noted said they were unable to get their minds to "turn off." Both have been living under increased stress in recent years. Both are concerned about their health. And both voiced fear of medication.

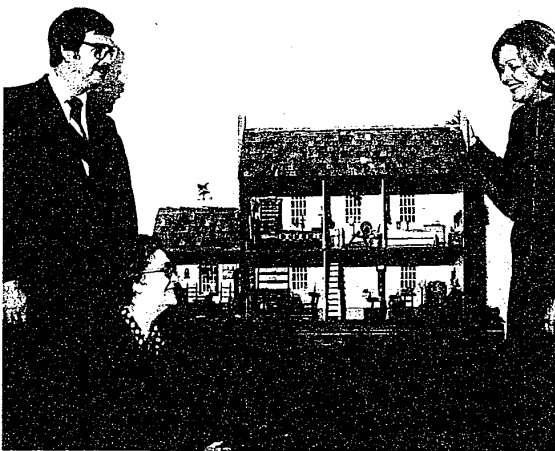
"I don't take medication," said Rita. "I was overmedicated in the past. I don't even drink coffee or tea and I eat very simply."

"I used to lie awake trying to settle problems," said Mary. "I tried to settle everything, my personal life, work, social life. I'm quite analytical and I was trying to understand whether I was worrying or thinking. I decided that I was thinking and that I couldn't turn it off."

Another shared concern is the effect of sleeplessness on their daytime responsibilities.

"Sometimes it takes three hours to fall asleep, which throws off the whole next day," said Mary. "My work pattern had to change to accommodate what was happening to me. I couldn't

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Early New England Country Colonial

The early New England country colonial doll house, circa 1750-1790, comes to the 32nd annual Junior Goodwill Antiques Market and Sale from Dan Williamson (at left) of Real Estate I in Farmington. It's this year's grand raffle prize that will go to the lucky winner at the close of the sale that runs Saturday through Monday, Nov. 10-12 in Fairlane Manor. Ellie Jorgensen (center) and Mary Jane Watkins, both Farmington Hills residents working for the fund-raiser this year,

are awed by the exquisite detail of the six rooms, four fireplaces, wide plank flooring and open hearth in the kitchen. The house is furnished with custom-made antique reproductions, complete down to a petipointe oriental rug, primitive lighting, handwoven coverlets on the beds and original oil paintings on the walls. Donation to the market is \$3, asked at the door, on Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and on Monday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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