

Beyond counting sheep: exercises for voluntary rapid eyes movements during insomnia

Salvatore Spadaro¹

Abstract: a cognitive-behavioural method to avoid insomnia is presented. This procedure involves exercises to generate a voluntary REM phase. This method is theoretical and has been tested only by the author. It is presented for empirical testing on a larger number of subjects.

Introduction: Sleep deprivation is one of the most worrying phenomena in Western societies (Naiman,2017). The causes are different and the phenomenon is complex. High levels of stress are related to this disorder. Prolonged sleep deprivation can cause psychiatric disorders such as derealization, depersonalization, and speech disorders. In this case, the circadian rhythm is disrupted and the REM phase absent. Drug therapies are not always effective and often have side effects. REM sleep must be carefully analyzed and other safer and more effective therapeutic options must be found.

The EVREM method in sleep deprivation

Exercises for voluntary rapid eyes movements (EVREM) are a series of four types of movements to generate a voluntary REM phase. After the discovery of the REM phase by N. Kleitman, E. Aserinsky and W. C. Dement (Aserinsky et al.,1953; Dement et al.,1957; Kleitman,1960), a lot of studies on insomnia have been conducted, in particular on REM sleep deprivation (Araujo et al.,2017; Feige et al.,2023, Riemann et al.2020;Altena et al.,2016). Drug therapies are the most common strategies to solve insomnia. However, side effects are not rare (Sasai et al., 2010; Di Bonaventura et al.,2015).

A cognitive-behavioural method has been developed to create an alternative to drug therapies.

The EVREM method is composed of four types of exercises that must be performed in a dark room, in a comfortable, relaxed position and with your eyes closed (see also image in the appendix):

- The first exercise requires that the eyes be moved to the right and left for 7-10 times;
- The second exercise involves moving your eyes up and down 7-10 times;
- The third exercise requires that the eyes be moved clockwise 7-10 times;
- The fourth exercise requires that the eyes be moved counterclockwise 7-10 times.

These exercises do not have to be performed in this order which can be random. These exercises must be performed several times until you develop a sort of tiredness. The author tried this method several times and was effective after about 10 minutes.

¹ M.A. in Philosophy, Sapienza University of Rome; M.Sc. in Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London.
Contacts: savvo90@live.it; ucjussp@ucl.ac.uk.

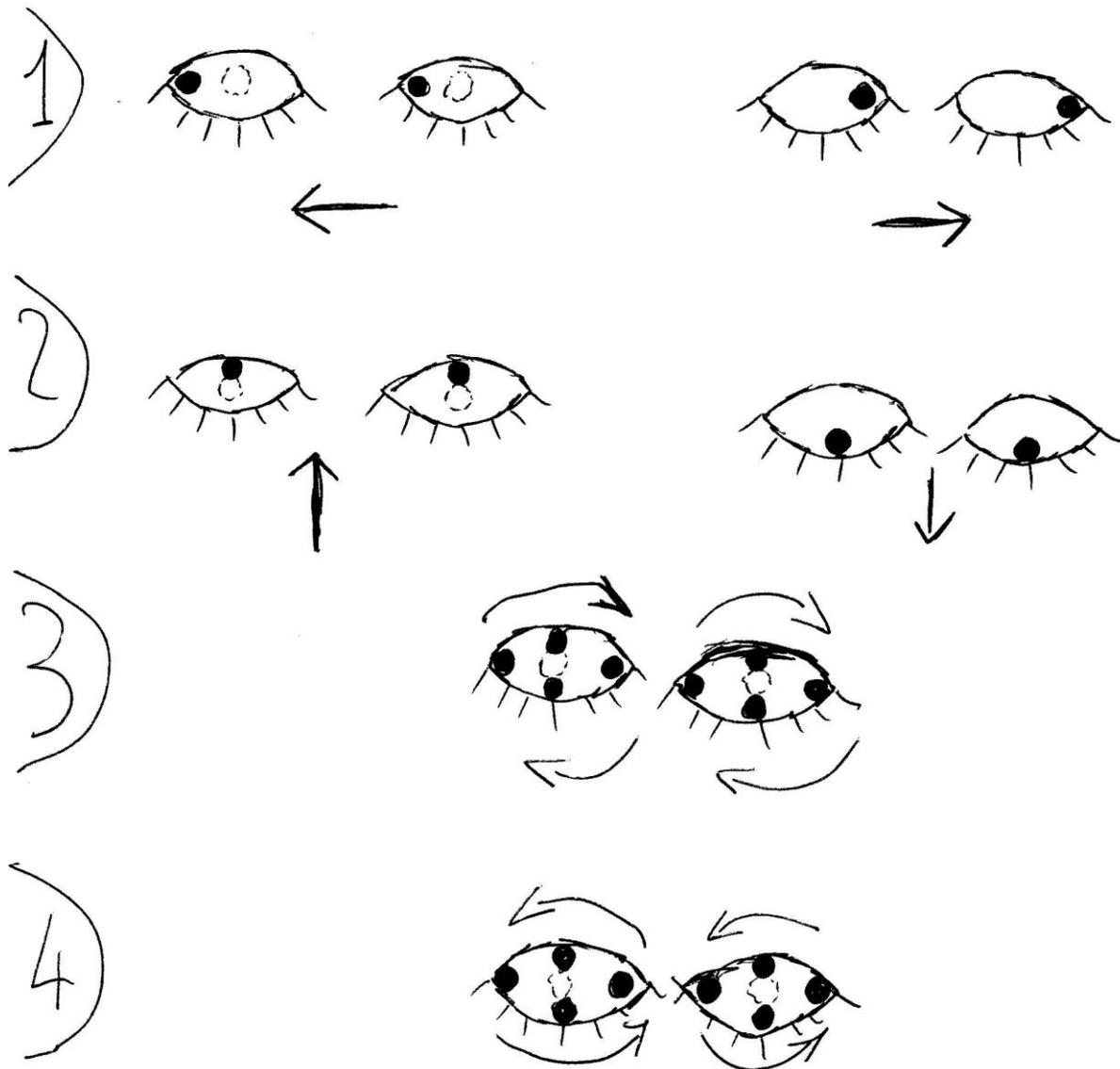
Conclusion

Cognitive-behavioural approaches should have a wider role in sleep deprivation disorders. Self-help strategies must be developed to find an alternative way to the drug approach. We encourage empirical studies that could confirm the validity of this cognitive-behavioural method.

References

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Appendix



Note on the image: The dotted circles indicate the starting position of the irises. The black dots indicate the positions of the irises during the exercises.