

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARD

2014

**Clinical innovations in comprehensive primary care
Dr. Judith Davidson - Kingston Family Health Team**

Helping the sleepless with drug-free insomnia therapy



Health doesn't get a lot more primary than the need for sleep, but insomnia is a problem for many people. Medications for it abound, but they can cause long-term problems.

Since 2007, however, when Dr. Judith Davidson began offering cognitive behaviour therapy for insomnia, patients of the Kingston Family Health Team have been learning to sleep better by changing their behaviour, instead of taking drugs.

The therapy works by teaching patients how to change the habits and other factors that interfere with good sleep. The therapy works: 90 per cent of the first 58 patients treated no longer reported insomnia after five weeks.

Despite being considered the preferred treatment for chronic insomnia, cognitive behavioural therapy is rarely available in Ontario (or anywhere else), but interest in it is strong. Dr. Davidson talks about sleep, insomnia and cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia to patient groups, the general public, clinical and scientific conferences.

Cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia is a good option for patients and for primary care providers, because it's a straightforward therapy that many different types of health professionals can be taught to lead, and it works for most people.

Dr. Davidson offers training in the technique to other physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, psychology students, medical residents, and other health-care professionals. Recently, when she offered a day of training in the technique for providers from other family health teams, there were so many who wanted to come a second day had to be offered.

Because of Dr. Davidson's work, more and more patients who have been suffering with chronic insomnia are able to reverse the sleep disorder and sleep well in the long term.

To encourage this kind of innovative thinking, Boehringer Ingelheim, sponsor of this Bright Lights Award, will send Dr. Judith Davidson to attend the Institute for Health Improvement Conference on March 15-17, 2015, in Dallas, Texas.