

Restless legs syndrome may signify bigger health problems

March 5 2014

A nationally-recognized sleep expert has published an editorial describing Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) as a possible biomarker for underlying disease. The editorial appears in the March 5, 2014 issue of *Neurology* the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology and was authored by Boston Medical Center neurologist Sanford H. Auerbach, MD.

RLS is a disorder of the nervous system. Patients with RLS have uncomfortable sensations in their legs which lead to an overwhelming urge to move them – most often at night or whenever the patient is resting.

The editorial was in response to an analysis of 12,556 men who were followed over time by the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study, published in the same issue of *Neurology*, which showed multiple disease associations with RLS.

"Patients with RLS had a higher mortality rate than similar men, and showed an especially strong tendency toward cardiovascular disease and hypertension," said Auerbach, associate professor of [neurology](#) and psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine. In earlier analyses of the same data, men with RLS were more likely to be diagnosed with lung disease, endocrine disease, diseases of nutrition and metabolism and immune system problems.

Auerbach suggests that [restless leg syndrome](#) is a meaningful biomarker

for serious disease, and that RLS screening may become more common as a tool for primary care providers to identify patients at risk.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

Citation: Restless legs syndrome may signify bigger health problems (2014, March 5) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

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