Evolutionary survival mechanism ‘gone-awry’ likely source of sleep walking

Recent research from Stanford University shows that up to 4 per cent of adults might have [walked in their sleep]. In fact, sleepwalking is on the rise, in part due to increased use of pharmacologically based sleep aids – notably Ambien.

‘The rational part of the brain is in a sleep-like state and does not exert its normal control over the limbic system and the motor system,’ explains the Italian neuroscientist Lino Nobili, a sleep researcher at Niguarda Hospital in Milan. ‘So behaviour is regulated by a kind of archaic survival system like the one that is activated during fight-or-flight.’

We need a restful sleep – would it not be more beneficial if the brain went totally ‘comatose’ until that rest was achieved? When one considers our distant, pre-human ancestors, answers begin to take shape. For aeons, the safety provided by the spot where our predecessors chose to lay their heads for the night was, in many ways, compromised compared with the safety of our current bedroom spaces.

[Nobli says] ‘If something really goes wrong and endangers you, you don’t need your frontal lobe’s rationality to escape. You need a motor system that is ready.’ In sleepwalking, however, this adaptive system has gone awry.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Sleepwalking is the result of a survival mechanism gone awry

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read GLP on Wikipedia.