

# Psychiatry Grand Rounds

WCM Department of Psychiatry  
Psychology CE Announcement



**Weill Cornell  
Medicine**  
Psychiatry

## *The sleep and suicide connection: the role of hyperarousal*

**William "Vaughn" McCall, MD, MS**  
Professor, Chair, and Executive Vice Dean Emeritus  
Medical College of Georgia  
Augusta University

**Location: Uris Auditorium AND Livestreamed via Zoom**

Wednesday, April 9th, 2025

11:00am – 12:00pm

<https://weillcornell.zoom.us/j/92812036154>

Meeting ID: 928 1203 6154

Password: 12345



1 CE credit available to WCM Department of Psychiatry full time and voluntary faculty Psychologists, Social Workers and LMHCs, who sign in with their full name, attend the entire lecture and complete a survey which will be emailed following the completion of the lecture. Note you can join no later than 10 minutes after the start of time and must stay for the entire duration of the event for CE eligibility. The CE survey must be completed within 30 days of the lecture. Please contact [wcmpsychiatryce@med.cornell.edu](mailto:wcmpsychiatryce@med.cornell.edu) for additional CE information

### *Speaker*

Dr. McCall presently is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Health Behavior at Medical College of Georgia (MCG). Dr. McCall served as the Case Distinguished University Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Health Behavior at MCG at Augusta University from 2012-2024. He also served as Executive Vice Dean and Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs for MCG. He completed his medical degree and post-graduate psychiatric training at Duke University. He completed a Master's degree in Epidemiology from Wake Forest University. He is board certified in general psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, and sleep medicine. His research interests include depression, electroconvulsive therapy, quality of life, insomnia, suicide, and the autonomic nervous system. He received 22 years of research support from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) through 2024, and is now site principal investigator for a new 5-year NIMH award on the topic of insomnia and suicide. He has more than 500 published items, including 280 peer-reviewed journal articles, with a Google Scholar H-index of 67. His papers in the American Journal of Psychiatry were twice picked by the Editors as among 7 "most interesting and important papers" published in that journal for the years 2017 and 2019. In 2023 he was ranked #46 in the world for scholarship on the topic of suicide (top 0.0055%) out of 84,356 scholars published on the topic of suicide, and among the top 14 psychiatrists in the world, and the top 5 psychiatrists in the USA over the prior 10 years. He served as Editor of the Journal of ECT for 20 years and has been Past Associate Editor for the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine. He is presently on the Editorial Board of Sleep and the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine. He has been the Past President of the Association for Convulsive Therapy, and a prior Director of the Board of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. He previously was the Chair of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine from 2001-2012.

*Financial Disclosure: Dr. McCall has no relevant financial relationship(s) with ineligible companies to disclose and DOES NOT INTEND to discuss off-label or investigational use of products or services.*

### *Abstract*

Insomnia is a well-documented risk factor for suicide phenomena, including suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior, and suicide death. Preliminary evidence suggests that targeted treatment of insomnia may reduce suicidal ideation. Relative increases in physiologic arousal are a common link between some patients with insomnia and some patients with clinical risk factors for suicide phenomena. Office-based, point-of-care tests that measure an individual's level of physiologic arousal have promise for development as practical biomarkers of suicide risk.

### *Learning Objectives*

1. Discuss the relationship between insomnia, its treatment, and the associated risk for suicide.
2. Explain potential mechanisms linking insomnia to increased suicide risk.
3. Compare and contrast two different assays used to measure physiologic arousal via the autonomic nervous system.

### *References*

1. McCall, W. V., Blocker, J. N., D'Agostino, R., Kimball, J., Boggs, N., Lasater, B., & Rosenquist, P. B. (2010). Insomnia severity is an indicator of suicidal ideation during a depression clinical trial. *Sleep Medicine, 11*(9), 822–827. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2010.04.004>
2. McCall, W. V., Benca, R. M., Rosenquist, P. B., Youssef, N. A., McCloud, L., Newman, J. C., Case, D., Rumble, M. E., Szabo, S. T., Phillips, M., & Krystal, A. D. (2019). Reducing Suicidal Ideation Through Insomnia Treatment (REST-IT): A Randomized Clinical Trial. *The American journal of psychiatry, 176*(11), 957–965. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2019.19030267>
3. McCall, W. V., Sareddy, S., Youssef, N. A., Miller, B. J., & Rosenquist, P. B. (2021). The pupillary light reflex as a point-of-care test for suicide risk: Preliminary results. *Psychiatry research, 295*, 113582. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113582>

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