

How did you become interested in Catatonia?

Dr. Beach:

I was interested in catatonia pretty much from the moment I saw my first patient with catatonia, which was when I was a third-year medical student on my psychiatry rotation. I remember being with a senior resident on an evening shift, and he took me to see this person who was catatonic, and I was just fascinated by the presentation and the exam.

I didn't think I had seen many patients with catatonia until I got up to Mass General to do my fellowship. I thought I had only seen two people in all of residency with catatonia, and when I was doing my fellowship, I saw probably about 20 to 30 cases of catatonia just in that year alone. What I realized was that I had, in fact, been seeing lots of patients with catatonia, I just hadn't been recognizing them as such. And it was through mentorship from Greg Fricchione and others that allowed me to increase my ability to recognize catatonia. That was when I got really excited about it, because I realized how underrecognized and underdiagnosed it was, and how much of a difference we could make simply by actually identifying it as something that needed treatment.