



What made you want to get involved with The Catatonia Foundation, and what do you hope that it can accomplish?

Dr. Northoff:

It's an excellent initiative and it's good that it's coming from those people who have had experience with catatonia themselves. It's basically a client-advocate group. And I think that's a very excellent idea.

Also that second thing, that catatonia is often underrecognized and that underrecognition has severe clinical consequences, because you can treat it so well with either lorazepam or others, or like ECT. You can prevent it, so awareness of catatonia can create a lot of reduction in suffering from it. So I think it's an excellent point.

And third, the research of catatonia was always at the fringes. It's not a mainstream topic. It's much easier to publish in a very good journal with, I don't know, the 400th paper of the year about schizophrenia than with one really original paper on catatonia. Which actually is clinically much more relevant because the editor of course follows the mainstream, same for the funding agencies. And it's very hard to get grants for catatonia, if not impossible, because people say, "Yeah, it doesn't exist anymore. It's just fringe, so rare." But the fact that it is rare doesn't mean it doesn't need research on it — particularly in a condition that you can treat so well. And it's so severe. It's even more severe than depression or anxiety. So please, all depressed people, don't understand me wrong here, but it's really an extremely severe condition. So I think it's an excellent idea to push it from that side.

Also, I would wish for more substantial research. There have been a lot of case reports in recent years. There have been very interesting studies on catatonia coming out, which is very good. And I hope that these studies can also converge a little bit in the definition and diagnosis of catatonia.