

What would you like other medical professionals who may not be familiar with catatonia to know about it?

Dr. McCall:

There's several things that other medical professionals should know about catatonia. The first is that once you have trained your senses to look for catatonic signs, you'll be surprised at how often you see them. And that rather than finding this as an overwhelming responsibility, that trying to potentially avoid being faced with managing patients with catatonia, is to realize that their treatment can be so dramatic and so gratifying. So I would hope other medical professionals, especially those working on medical floors, working in trauma, and so forth, would be encouraged to look for persons experiencing catatonia. The literature suggests that there's more catatonic presentations on non-psychiatric floors in a hospital — that is, medical or surgical floors — than even in the psychiatric floors.

So we hope that most hospitals have a psychiatric consultation expert who goes around to the medical and surgical floors to help out. But this assumes that there was at least a suspicion on the part of the non-psychiatrist to have precipitated the consultation. So, bottom line is, I think there's a lot of catatonia that's not seen by psychiatrists.

It's so rewarding to treat. People should be on the lookout for it.