

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

Dr. Gazdag:

My main message would be, catatonia is relatively frequent. Its prevalence in a general psychiatric population is between 5 and 10 percent, but in a psychiatric emergency unit, even much higher rates have also been found. But it's not only psychiatric disorders that can cause catatonia — a number of somatic disorders can also present with catatonia.

So before referring the catatonic patient to psychiatry, somatic causes of the condition must be ruled out. The lorazepam challenge test may be a useful tool in confirming catatonia and differentiating it from other somatic disorders.

My second message would be to start adequate treatment of catatonia without delay. Treatment of first choice is benzodiazepines, and in case of treatment resistance, the second choice is ECT.