

**TITLE 1:** "Ask the Doctor"

**TITLE 2:**

**DATE:** August 1998

**AUTHOR/S:** William Ondo

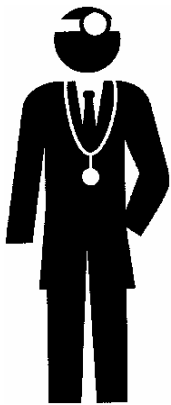
**KEYWORDS:**

- Pharmaceutical treatment
- Depression

**ABSTRACT OVERVIEW:** A question from a reader as to whether antidepressants could help RLS symptoms. Specific mention is made of the drugs Sinemet and Verelan.

**COPY OF ARTICLE:**

**Q.** *I am wondering if the new antidepressants that block reuptake of serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine might help RLS. I am currently taking 800 mg of carbidopa/levodopa and 240 mg of Verelan a day and that seems to be helping my restless legs, but is there a cure for RLS?*



**A.** Unfortunately, there is no cure for RLS, however most cases can be treated to some extent.

Currently, most evidence suggests that dopamine is the key neurotransmitter in RLS. There is no good evidence that increasing serotonin or norepinephrine improves the condition. In fact, in some cases, medicine that increase levels of those other neurotransmitters (which include most antidepressants to some extent) may worsen RLS symptoms in some people. Dopamine is eliminated by other enzymes (MAO and COMT) rather than by "re-uptake," so a pure dopamine "re-uptake" inhibitor would probably have only a moderate effect on RLS symptoms. Currently, there is no pure dopamine re-uptake inhibitor available, but there are several medications, including Sinemet, that increases dopamine activity. Verelan is a calcium

channel blocker, usually used for hypertension. I am not aware of any RLS benefit from this medication.

*William Ondo, MD*

*Baylor College of Medicine*

*Houston, TX*