

**TITLE 1:** "Ask the Doctors"

**TITLE 2:**

**DATE:** May 1998

**AUTHOR/S:** Arthur S. Walters, MD

**KEYWORDS:**

- Awareness

**ABSTRACT OVERVIEW:** One reader asks whether RLS is neurologic with additional questions on the role of the muscles in RLS and the central nervous system.

**COPY OF ARTICLE:**

**Q.** *I have been told that RLS is neurologic. What role do the muscles themselves play in RLS?*



*Are they responsible for the discomfort that I feel in my legs? Is RLS restricted to the central nervous system?*

**A.** There are various hypotheses as to the cause of RLS. In most cases, the cause of RLS is unknown, but in certain cases, one can postulate a vascular cause such as varicose veins or a neurologic cause such as peripheral nerve damage due to diabetes, alcohol, etc. or lumbosacral radiculopathy, which is a pinched nerve in the back causing back and leg pain (sciatica). The muscles are not thought to play a causal role in RLS. Whether one entertains a vascular or a neurologic cause as primary, any discomfort that one feels ultimately must be mediated by the central nervous system.

*Arthur S. Walters, MD*

*Robert Wood Johnson Medical School  
New Brunswick, NJ*