

Man in Coma for 7 Years was Given a Sleeping Pill and Woke Up

Curious Cat Science and Engineering Blog

[Lazarus pill miracle for E Cape man](#) [1], 9 September 2012

After reading a report in City Press last month, his wife, Nomfundo, insisted that he be given a prescription for the sleeping pill Stilnox, which has the opposite effect on those with brain injuries.

It worked and brought him out of a seven-year coma.

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But on August 12, family friend Nceba Mokoena came across an article in City Press about a miracle recovery made by another car crash victim, hundreds of kilometres away in Gauteng.

Louis Viljoen was given the sleeping pill by chance by his mother, Sienie.

She had noticed he wasn't sleeping peacefully and asked her doctor if she could give him half a sleeping tablet. After she did, Louis opened his eyes and said "Hello Mamma", his first words in five years.

Very cool anecdote and example that modern medicine has many miraculous cures but the medical system can't always use them as well as we would hope. Even with all the knowledge we have today just getting that information into the right doctor's minds is very hard. And the complexity of diagnoses and interactions makes medical care still an art as well as a science.

So is this just some freak accident. Partially, in the mother giving her son a sleeping pill to reduce his seeming restlessness in the coma. But the effect of Stilnox in bringing coma victims out of a coma has been documented previously.

[Reborn from persistent vegetative state](#) [2], 12 September 2006

Four three years, Riaan Bolton has lain motionless, his eyes open but unseeing. After a devastating car crash doctors said he would never again see or speak or hear. Now his mother, Johanna, dissolves a pill in a little water on a teaspoon and forces it gently into his mouth. Within half an hour, as if a switch has been flicked in his brain, Riaan looks around his home in the South African town of Kimberley and says, "Hello." Shortly after his accident, Johanna had turned down the option of letting him die.

Three hundred miles away, Louis Viljoen, a young man who had once been cruelly described by a doctor as "a cabbage", greets me with a mischievous smile and a streetwise four-move handshake. Until he took the pill, he too was supposed to be in what doctors call a persistent vegetative state.

Across the Atlantic in the United States, George Melendez, who is also brain-

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

damaged, has lain twitching and moaning as if in agony for years, causing his parents unbearable grief. He, too, is given this little tablet and again, it's as if a light comes on. His father asks him if he is, indeed, in pain. "No," George smiles, and his family burst into tears.

It all sounds miraculous, you might think. And in a way, it is. But this is not a miracle medication, the result of groundbreaking neurological research. Instead, these awakenings have come as the result of an accidental discovery by a dedicated – and bewildered – GP. They have all woken up, paradoxically, after being given a commonly used sleeping pill.

Medical care is still today an extremely difficult area where highly trained and continuously learning doctors still have a great deal of trouble keeping up with the latest medical knowledge.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/27/2015 - 12:35pm):

http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2012/09/man-coma-7-years-was-given-sleeping-pill-and-woke?qt-recent_content=0

Links:

[1] <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Lazarus-pill-gives-Eastern-Cape-man-a-miracle-20120909>

[2] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2006/sep/12/health.healthandwellbeing>