



A DREAM COME TRUE

BY WENDY ALLEN

THE LAGUNA BEACH SLEEP CENTER

The Laguna Beach Sleep Center is a state-of-the-art sleep facility. High-tech recording equipment is used to monitor patients' sleeping and waking periods in a noninvasive way and allows them to sleep as comfortably as if at home. Every detail is designed to be comfortable and stress-free. The center features travertine floors, granite countertops, spacious queen-sized beds, elegant bathroom accommodations, 32-inch televisions and a breathtaking view of the Pacific Ocean.



Thanks to the Laguna Beach Sleep Center, one man is able to **sleep tight**—and lead a well-rested life

Sleep disorders affect more than 70 million Americans. Many of these restless nights are caused by situational occurrences such as too much caffeine or loud noises. These disturbances are easy to remedy—simply change the situation and a restful sleep will be restored. Other sleep disorders, however, require more attention. Narcolepsy, sleep apnea, insomnia and restless leg syndrome should be evaluated in a sleep center by a specialist.

George K. Shahinian, M.D., FCCP, is the founder of the Laguna Beach Sleep Center. Located on the SCMC campus, the Laguna Beach Sleep Center diagnoses and treats a multitude of sleep disorders for South Orange County residents. "I am dedicated to the community we serve," Dr. Shahinian says. "We see about 20 patients each week and our goal is to restore a restful night's sleep to each and every one of them."

A COMPLICATED CASE

One of these patients is Laguna Beach resident Angelo Giuliano. As a child, Giuliano had a hard time concentrating in school. He was diagnosed with having attention deficit disorder (ADD) and was put on medication. Even as a child, Giuliano didn't feel he was being diagnosed properly. "Somehow I knew I didn't have ADD, but I continued taking the medications because I felt I had no choice." Giuliano soon became depressed and his parents put him on an antidepressant. The medications eventually took their toll. "When I was 17, I decided that enough was enough; I refused to continue taking the prescriptions."

While in college, Giuliano continued to have trouble focusing throughout the day. "I'd nod off in class and usually would nap four to five hours during the day, after having had a full night's sleep," he says. "My body would just shut down."

Finding it difficult to concentrate, he was once again prescribed medicine to treat ADD. Giuliano reluctantly took the medication because he just didn't know what else to do. Now the owner of a small advertising agency, the problem was affecting his livelihood. Then someone suggested he might have a sleep disorder and recommended he see a specialist.

That's when Giuliano met Dr. Shahinian. When he walked into the offices, Giuliano was immediately impressed. "Dr. Shahinian is very personable and professional," Giuliano says. "For the first time, I had hope that someone would finally be able to get to the bottom of my problem."

Before treatment could begin, Dr. Shahinian completed an extensive consultation with Giuliano, asking him a series of comprehensive questions to determine the nature of his sleep disorder. At the end of this consultation, Dr. Shahinian had a probable cause for what was ailing Giuliano and scheduled him to undergo a sleep study to be certain.

THE SLEEP STUDY

A sleep study is a painless test that examines the patient's quality of sleep. On March 13, Giuliano arrived at the Sleep Center at 7:30 p.m. He entered a fantastic room with an incredible ocean view. "I told my wife it was like staying in a spa," he says. The staff prepared Giuliano for the study.

To be able to monitor his sleep patterns, the staff gently secured monitoring equipment to his body, using special tape. The equipment would monitor Giuliano's brain waves, muscle and eye movements, electrocardiogram, and breathing patterns. Giuliano drifted off to sleep at around 9 p.m.

Giuliano's sleep study was completed by 7 a.m. the next morning and he continued with the rest of his day. However, after Dr. Shahinian reviewed the results from the sleep study, he determined that Giuliano would need to undergo a second study, to be conducted during the daytime. This was for the Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT). The MSLT monitors the patient's REM (rapid eye movement) sleep and non-REM sleep. Specifically, it focuses on how quickly the patient goes into REM sleep. For most people, non-REM sleep takes place first. During this time, the body repairs and regenerates tissues, builds bone and muscle and strengthens the immune system. Approximately 90 minutes into non-REM sleep, the REM sleep stage then occurs for most people. During REM, intense dreams may occur as the brain undergoes heightened activity.



"I'M NOW ABLE TO FUNCTION NORMALLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY."

—ANGELO GIULIANO

Photograph by Faye Chapman

During the MSLT, the patient takes four to five naps during the day and alternates the naps with 90-minute intervals of staying awake. The staff noted the results and scheduled Giuliano for a follow-up visit with Dr. Shahinian.

THE DIAGNOSIS

A few days after the sleep study, Giuliano met with Dr. Shahinian. "When I sat down, he told me I had narcolepsy," Giuliano says.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, narcolepsy is a chronic neurological disorder caused by the brain's inability to regulate sleep-wake cycles, affecting about one in every 2,000 Americans. "Finally, after all these years and all the unnecessary medications, I learned what was at the root of it all. This was a big moment for me."

That's not surprising to Dr. Shahinian. "My patients are usually the last to know they have a sleep disorder," he says, noting that usually the patient's spouse or another loved one is the person who brings it to his or her attention. "People will say, 'I don't have a problem. I can sleep anywhere,

any time.' And that's what ends up happening. They will fall asleep at work, in public places and, unfortunately, while driving." Dr. Shahinian prescribed Provigil, a medication used to improve wakefulness in adult patients with excessive sleepiness associated with disorders such as narcolepsy.

THE OUTCOME

Giuliano knows firsthand the importance of the Sleep Center for the community. "I'm now able to function normally throughout the day. I can't thank Dr. Shahinian and the staff at the Laguna Beach Sleep Center enough."

Dr. Shahinian has an impressive success rate with restoring restful, recuperative sleep to his patients. "Our treatments are very effective. The majority of the patients who go through our program and follow our treatment plans are cured."

He knows he and his staff are helping people return to productive lives by stabilizing normal sleep patterns. For Giuliano, though, the Laguna Beach Sleep Center has profound meaning for him because, as he says, "They gave me back my life." ❧

DOCTOR SPOTLIGHT

GEORGE K. SHAHINIAN, M.D., FCCP SLEEP AND LUNG SPECIALIST

Dr. George K. Shahinian received his fellowship training in sleep disorders at Pennsylvania State University, Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. He is board-certified in internal medicine and pulmonary medicine.

In addition to being a top-rated sleep specialist, Dr. Shahinian is also a lung specialist and treats patients with breathing, coughing, respiratory and asthma conditions. He has been affiliated with SCMC since 2005.

The Laguna Beach Sleep Center accepts Medicare and most insurance. They are available for sleep studies seven days a week. If you or a family member has any of the above symptoms and you suspect a disorder, call **949-715-0505**.



George K. Shahinian,
M.D., FCCP