

King v cogdon

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



King v Cogdon, was an Australian case heard in 1950. Ms. Cogdon who suffers from minor neurotic conditions is believed to be her daughter's murderer. She had on an occasion dreamt spiders were attacking her daughter (Pat). That night Ms. Cogdon had slept walked into her room and began to violently brush the spiders off her daughter's face in her sleep. On the night of the murder, Ms. Cogdon dreamt of soldiers attacking Pat. Though Ms. Cogdon did not recall the incident, she remembered telling her sister that she thought she had hurt Pat. Unconscious Crime Sleepwalkers arise in a state of low consciousness, but are able to perform activities that would otherwise be performed in a state of full consciousness.

These activities can range anywhere from: Cleaning, hazardous cooking, driving, grabbing at hallucinated objects, or even homicide. Usually sleepwalking in adults is a sign of drug abuse or some sort of disorder. Sleepwalking is less common in adults than children. Although, sleepwalkers have their eyes open, they have very little or no memory of the incident. Sleepwalkers become bystanders of their own crimes. With this said, should Ms Cogdon be held responsible for the death of her daughter while sleepwalking? Was the Killing of Pat Involuntary? Ms. Cogdon and Pat's relationship was a close one. Ms. Cogdon always worried about her 19 year old daughter Pat, who had for some time been receiving psychiatric treatment for a minor neurotic condition. Although doctors had said she was cured, Ms Cogdon often worried that she was okay.

The night before Pat's death, they had both gone to the cinema. During their outing they had engaged in a conversation having to do with the war in Korea. This war troubled Ms. Cogdon. She was worried it would one day

reach her door steps. Because of her sleepwalking, and other difficulties she had reported to her doctor, he had prescribed her a sedative. There had also been talk of the possibility of psychiatric treatment. That night that Ms. Cogdon fell asleep, she began to dream of the war, and that one of the soldiers was attacking Pat in her bed.

It was then when Ms Cogdon in her sleepwalking state, grabbed an axe and struck Pat on the head twice with it killing her. Sleepwalking is one form of automatism, and does not consist of free will. Because sleepwalking is a phenomenon in its own, courts are not properly equipped to evaluate such claims. During the trial Ms. Cogdon plead not guilty, but refused to plea insanity. Experts agreed Ms. Cogdon was not psychotic. Acquitted of Murder Ms.

Cogdon was soon released of the murder charges with the defense of automatism. It was believed that Ms. Cogdon had been sleep walking when she wandered into Pat's room, and her bodily motions were beyond her control. Her story was also supported when her doctors gave testimony that she indeed suffered from mental and physical stresses. At the trial there was enough evidence to believe Ms Cogdon's acts were involuntary, and therefore convincing the jury of her innocence. Ms. Cogdon was then acquitted of the crime.