

Insomnia in parents can result in sleep problems, suicidal behavior among their offspring

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A history of chronic insomnia in parents is not only associated with elevated risk for insomnia but also with elevated risks for use of hypnotics, psychopathology and suicidal behavior in adolescent offspring, according to a research abstract that will be presented on Thursday at SLEEP 2008, the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS).

The study, authored by Xianchen Liu, MD, PhD, of the University of Pittsburgh, focused on 798 teenagers (450 boys and 348 girls), with an average age of 14.4 years, who completed a sleep and health questionnaire.

According to the results, compared with adolescents of parents without insomnia, participants of insomnia parents were more than twice more likely to report insomnia, daytime fatigue, and use of hypnotics. Adolescents of insomnia parents were also more likely to have depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation and suicide attempts during the past year.

“These results suggest that a history of chronic insomnia in parents is not only associated with elevated risk for insomnia, but also with elevated risks for a wide range of mental health problems, substance use, and suicidal behavior in adolescent offspring,” said Dr. Liu. “Family sleep interventions may be important to enhance sleep quality and decrease

risks for sleep disturbance, psychopathology and suicidal behavior in adolescents. Further studies are warranted to examine how and the extent to which genetic and environmental factors interact in determining sleep disturbances and psychopathology among adolescents.”

Insomnia is a classification of sleep disorders in which a person has trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or waking up too early. It is the most commonly reported sleep disorder.

It is recommended that adolescents get nine hours of nightly sleep.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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