

# Sleep disorders common among professional drivers

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Sleep disorders are common among bus and tram drivers in Gothenburg: a quarter say that they have problems with daytime sleepiness, which could affect safety. Such are the results of a new study from the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, presented at the annual Swedish Sleep Medicine Congress in Gothenburg on 21-23 April.

The third annual Swedish Sleep Medicine Congress, organised by the Swedish Sleep Research and [Sleep Medicine](#) Society (SFSS), was recently held in Gothenburg, Sweden. Around 250 researchers, doctors and invited guests from around the world took part in the congress, which run from 21 to 23 April. A number of new research findings which could lead to improved treatment and diagnosis of various [sleep disorders](#) were presented at the congress, as well as new knowledge about sleep mechanisms, our [biological clock](#) and the impact of sleep disorders on society in general.

Among the speakers were scientists from the Sahlgrenska Academy reporting on their latest research results, including Mahssa Karimi, a doctoral student from the Center for Sleep and Vigilance Disorders. Her research project looked at the incidence of sleep disorders in 116 bus and tram drivers in Gothenburg. The study found that 23% have problems with pronounced daytime sleepiness, 28% have trouble getting to sleep, 29% suffer from restless legs, and 19% have sleep apnoea (pauses in breathing while asleep which can result in tiredness and difficulty concentrating during the day).

"We looked more closely at the drivers with sleep apnoea because previous studies have shown that these patients run a clearly increased risk of accidents due to drowsiness," says Karimi.

The drivers with sleep apnoea were treated with a CPAP machine, where a breathing mask is used to maintain a positive pressure in the airways, keeping them open and so preventing snoring and apnoea while asleep.

"The study showed that these drivers stopped having apnoea episodes during the night and also had significantly lower blood pressure and, above all, greatly reduced daytime sleepiness," says Karimi.

The researchers had to actively look for sleep disorders in the group of professional drivers who had not already sought medical assistance for their problems. They found a large number of sleep disorders in these drivers which in many cases significantly affected their alertness and concentration. When the drivers received treatment for these disorders, there was a clear improvement.

"Our findings suggest that it's important to systematically examine professional drivers and other professional groups entrusted with the safety of others in order to be able to treat any sleep disorders, as their work demands alertness and concentration at all times," says Karimi.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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