

'My bladder is full and I can't think!' - Lifespan researcher wins Ig Nobel Prize

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Peter J. Snyder, Ph.D., vice president of research for Lifespan, received one of 10 Ig Nobel Prize awards during the annual ceremony last night at Harvard University. Snyder, along with his co-authors and colleagues from the University of Melbourne and Yale Medical School, were recognized for their work which found that an acute urge to void the bladder can have the same impact on impairing cognitive function as small amounts of alcohol or sleep deprivation. Credit: Lifespan

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While it sounds unusual, in reality, the findings have important implications for groups such as long-distance truck drivers. These findings also help in efforts to understand the shared neurologic mechanisms that are involved in both [pain perception](#) and in concentration and problem-solving abilities.

The Ig Nobel Prizes "honor achievements that first make people laugh and then make them think. The prizes are intended to celebrate the unusual, honor the imaginative -- and spur people's interest in science, medicine, and technology." Administered by Improbable Research, this year marks the 21st "1st Annual [Ig Nobel Prize](#) Ceremony." Each year, prizes are presented to recipients by past Nobel laureates in a ceremony held at Harvard University.

Snyder and his colleagues' paper, "The Effect of Acute Increase in Urge to Void on Cognitive Function in Healthy Adults" was published in 2010 in the journal *Neurourology and Urodynamics* (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nau.20963/abstract>). It involved eight healthy adults who took part in an experiment in which they consumed 250 milliliters of water every 15 minutes. The researchers then used standardized measures of cognitive function at hourly intervals.

As anticipated, the researchers found that the urge to void and pain increased with time and with amount of water consumed. More importantly, they found that having an extreme urge to void had a negative effect on attention and working [memory functions](#). The impact on cognitive function was equivalent to low levels of alcohol intoxication or fatigue, and thus, could increase the risk of accidents in occupational settings. These cognitive functions returned to normal almost immediately after voiding.

Snyder says, "Receiving an Ig Nobel Prize was completely unexpected,

but also one of the oddest highlights in my career. When we did the research, we understood that it may seem a bit quirky, but this study really does have important and practical implications for everyday life. I know I speak on behalf of my colleagues when I say it was an honor to be among this year's recipients, and we thank Improbable Research for bringing attention to the fact that science can also be fun." Snyder talks more about the study and the award in this video:

Snyder, who is also a professor of neurology at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University in Providence, R.I., co-authored the paper with Drs. Matthew S. Lewis of CogState Ltd. in Australia, Robert H. Pietrzak of the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, C.T.; David Darby of CogState, Ltd.; Robert A. Feldman Urology Specialists, PC in Waterbury, CT, and Paul Maruff of both CogState Ltd. and the Centre for Neuroscience at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Both Drs. Snyder and Feldman were on hand to receive their Ig Nobel Prize on behalf of all co-authors.

Provided by Lifespan

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