

Poor sleep equal to binge drinking, marijuana use in predicting academic problems

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A new study shows that college students who are poor sleepers are much more likely to earn worse grades and withdraw from a course than healthy sleeping peers.

Results show that sleep timing and maintenance problems in [college students](#) are a strong predictor of academic problems even after controlling for other factors that contribute to academic success, such as clinical depression, feeling isolated, and diagnosis with a learning disability or chronic health issue. The study also found that [sleep problems](#) have about the same impact on grade point average (GPA) as binge drinking and marijuana use. Its negative impact on [academic success](#) is more pronounced for freshmen. Among first-year students, poor sleep— but not [binge drinking](#), marijuana use or learning disabilities diagnosis—independently predicted dropping or withdrawing from a course. Results were adjusted for potentially confounding factors such as race, gender, work hours, chronic illness, and psychiatric problems such as anxiety.

"Well-rested students perform better academically and are healthier physically and psychologically," said investigators Roxanne Prichard, PhD, associate professor of psychology and Monica Hartmann, professor of economics at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The research abstract was published recently in an online supplement of

the journal *Sleep* and will be presented Tuesday, June 3, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at SLEEP 2014, the 28th annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies LLC.

Data from the Spring 2009 American College Health Association National College Health Assessment (NCHA) were analyzed to evaluate factors that predict undergraduate [academic problems](#) including dropping a course, earning a lower course grade and having a lower cumulative GPA. Responses from over 43,000 participants were included in the analysis.

According to Prichard, student health information about the importance of sleep is lacking on most university campuses.

"Sleep problems are not systematically addressed in the same way that substance abuse problems are," she said. "For colleges and universities, addressing [sleep](#) problems early in a student's academic career can have a major economic benefit through increased retention."

More information: "What Is The Cost Of Poor Sleep For College Students? Calculating The Contribution to Academic Failures Using A Large National Sample," *Sleep*, 2014.

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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