

Findings on insomnia in children and cancer

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College of Nursing colleagues Ellyn Matthews, PhD, RN, AOCNS, CBSM, Madalynn Neu, PhD, RN, and Paul Cook, PhD, have published research findings on sleep among children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and their mothers.

"Sleep in Mother and Child Dyads During Treatment for Pediatric Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia" was published this fall in the journal *Oncology Nursing Forum*.

The authors note that ALL is the form of cancer diagnosed among one-third of all the cases of cancer in children between birth and age 14. While survival rates are good for these patients, symptoms such as disrupted sleep and fatigue can cause stress for the child as well as for the family or caregivers.

To better understand these cases, the researchers asked study participants to complete questionnaires and sleep diaries to evaluate the amount and quality of their [sleep time](#). In addition, [mothers](#) and children wore a wrist actiwatch, an accelerometer that detects motion and sleep/rest and wake periods. Mothers with children who have ALL reported greater insomnia compared to controls, which was associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms, and stress. Maternal groups did not differ on diary and actigraph measured sleep outcomes, yet both groups experienced sleep fragmentation. Children with ALL took longer to fall asleep and had worse sleep habits and patterns.

For the researchers, the results indicate an important role for oncology

nurses who may be in situations where they can spot sleep-related problems in both the children with ALL and their mothers. These nurses could offer recommendations or referral assistance to better manage [sleep disruptions](#).

More information: "Sleep in Mother and Child Dyads During Treatment for Pediatric Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia" *Oncology Nursing Forum* [DOI: 10.1188/14.ONF.41-06P](https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.41-06P)

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