Study identifies specific work factors that predict sleep problems

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A new study found that specific psychological and social work factors were associated with sleep problems both concurrently and two years after exposure, indicating prolonged consequences.

Results show that quantitative job demands, decision control, role conflict and support from a superior in the workplace were the most

consistent predictors of troubled [sleep](#), which was characterized by difficulty initiating sleep or disturbed sleep. Findings remained significant after adjustment for potential con-founders such as age, sex and occupation skill level.

"Apart from raising a general awareness of the significance of these factors for health and well-being, the results should be directly applicable in practical efforts to target [sleep problems](#) among employees," said lead author Jolien Vleeshouwers, PhD-candidate at the National Institute of Occupational Health in Oslo, Norway. "Since these work factors are relatively specific and modifiable, intervention programs may be developed to target employees' appraisal of these work factors in order to improve sleep, which could in turn have an effect on health, sickness, absence and productivity."

Study results are published in the April issue of the journal *Sleep*.

The study involved Norwegian employees from 63 different companies, covering a wide variety of jobs. Prospective analyses comprised a sample of 5,070 participants who completed web-based questionnaires at baseline and approximately 2 years later. Subjects were asked how many times in the past 4 weeks they experienced "difficulties falling asleep" and "disturbed sleep." The General Nordic Questionnaire for Psychological and Social Factors at Work was used to explore factors such as:

- Quantitative job demands, which refers to the employee's perception of workload and time available to complete necessary tasks
- Decision control, which describes the autonomy that employees experience in controlling decisions about how their job is done
- Role conflict, which involves the potential clash between expectations and roles, or between task execution and personal

values
- Support from superiors, which is the experience of instrumental as well as emotional support from a superior or manager in the workplace

According to the authors, the results support the Demand-Control-(Support) Model, which states that negative health effects may result from a combination of high job demands and low job control.

More information: "Effects of Psychological and social work Factors on Self-Reported Sleep Disturbance and Difficulties Initiating Sleep", *Sleep*, 2016.

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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