

# Bed partners may unintentionally contribute to the perpetuation of insomnia

June 4 2017

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Preliminary results from a new study show that partners of people who have insomnia may try to be supportive by engaging in a range of behaviors that unintentionally contradict treatment recommendations.

Results show that 74 percent of partners encouraged an early bedtime or late wake time, which is in direct conflict with the principles of [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) for insomnia (CBTI). Forty-two percent also encouraged doing other things in bed, such as reading or watching TV, and 35 percent encouraged naps, caffeine or reduced daytime activities.

"It is possible that partners are unwittingly perpetuating [insomnia symptoms](#) in the patient with insomnia," said lead author Alix Mellor, PhD, postdoctoral research fellow and coordinator of the Researching Effective Sleep Treatments (REST) project in the School of Psychological Sciences at Monash University in Victoria, Australia. "It is therefore important for more data to be collected to determine whether insomnia treatments may better benefit patients and their partners by proactively assessing and addressing bed [partner](#) behaviors in [treatment](#) programs."

The research team was led by Mellor and chief investigator Sean P. A. Drummond, PhD, professor of clinical neuroscience at the Monash Institute of Cognitive and Clinical Neurosciences. They studied 31 partners, including 14 women, of individuals seeking treatment for insomnia as part of a randomized, controlled trial investigating partner-assisted interventions for insomnia. Partners completed several questionnaires at baseline: the Family Accommodation Scale, Beck Anxiety Inventory, and Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The insomnia patients also completed baseline questionnaires, including the Insomnia Severity Index, and kept a sleep diary for one week prior to starting treatment.

Results also show that bed partners made accommodations that affected their own functioning, including their sleep and life outside of work. This may explain why partners who attempted to be helpful experienced more anxiety, even though the [insomnia patients](#) perceived the relationship to be more satisfying.

"Our preliminary results suggest that while some of these behaviors make the patient feel supported, their partner may be experiencing more anxiety," said Mellor.

The research abstract was published recently in an [online supplement of the journal \*Sleep\*](#) and will be presented Sunday, June 4, in Boston at SLEEP 2017, the 31st Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies LLC (APSS), which is a joint venture of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society.

**More information:** Abstract Title: Bed Partner Accommodation of Insomnia in Treatment-Seeking Couples

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Poster Presentation: 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., board 106

Presenter: Alix Mellor, PhD

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