

New study to measure impact of sleep tracker data on patient-provider communication

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According to a survey by Pew Research, nearly two-thirds of adults in the U.S. collect their own data on at least one health indicator through the use of tracking devices and apps, and it is estimated by industry analysts that over 30 million Americans have access to their sleep data. While many patients are treated for sleep disturbances in primary care practices, much of this tracked sleep data never reaches the health care providers, and the impact on care is largely unknown.

A new exploratory study from the National Sleep Foundation and Merck, in collaboration with the Regenstrief Institute examines how use of sleep tracker data might improve patient-provider communication, and ultimately, patient satisfaction with that communication. The prospective, randomized, parallel group study is funded by Merck and the National Sleep Foundation, and will utilize Fitbit devices.

"The primary objective of the study is to determine if a program using a commercially available sleep tracker can be used to improve physician-patient dialogue regarding sleep," Babar A. Khan, MD, of the Indiana University Center for Aging Research at Regenstrief Institute and the Indiana University School of Medicine, who will lead the project.

Research participants—210 patients with insomnia and their Indianapolis-based [primary care](#) providers—will use the National Sleep Foundation's SleepLife program to provide a continuous flow of real time sleep information over the course of the study. The tool will combine sleep data from Fitbit Charge 2 devices into SleepLife's secure

interface accessible to patients and physicians. Researchers will then measure results through objective data collected through the tracker, and subjective data via questionnaires.

"This study will provide insight into the utility of consumer sleep monitoring devices for the incorporation of sleep as a vital sign in the primary care setting. Delivering relevant sleep information to providers in a streamlined fashion is paramount to encouraging communication about sleep and helping people get a better night's sleep sooner," said Michael Paskow, MPH, Director of Scientific Affairs & Research at the National Sleep Foundation.

"Wearable devices have revolutionized our ability to collect and monitor health data on a much larger scale and the ability to provide sleep data on a daily basis can help increase our understanding of real world sleep habits and how to improve them," said Dr. Conor Heneghan, lead sleep research scientist at Fitbit.

The results of this study are anticipated to serve as a model for further research exploring a new paradigm for patient-provider communication, and the integration of objective, patient-generated data through applications and wearable technology into primary care.

Provided by Regenstrief Institute

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