

Clues for improving sleep in visually impaired athletes

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Sleep is very important for athletes, and sleep loss can affect physical performance and cognitive ability. But now, researchers from the University of Tsukuba have identified the prevalence of sleep disorders in visually impaired athletes, as well as specific risk factors associated with lower sleep quality.

In a study published last November in *Sleep Medicine*, researchers from the University of Tsukuba conducted a survey of 99 visually impaired athletes in Japan and analyzed data from 81 respondents. They found that approximately one-third of the respondents had sleep disorders. Further, higher levels of stress regarding interpersonal relationships in competition activities and a later wake-up time were associated with the rate of sleep disorders.

As sleep disorders are known to be especially common in visually impaired individuals, athletes who are visually impaired may be especially at risk. However, the factors associated with sleep quality in visually impaired athletes are unknown. Therefore, the researchers at the University of

Tsukuba aimed to address this in their study.

To examine the prevalence and risk factors associated with sleep disorders in visually impaired athletes, the researchers collected data regarding the severity of vision loss, sleep quality, lifestyle habits, competition activities, and [psychological distress](#) in visually impaired athletes who were active in Paralympic sports events in Japan, such as marathon running, goalball, swimming, blind soccer, and judo.

"Our data indicated that roughly a third of the study participants had sleep disorders," explains Professor Takeda. "This prevalence was similar to that found in sighted athletes, including other para-athletes."

"Our analysis revealed that stress associated with [interpersonal relationships](#) in competition activities was independently related to sleep disorders in the study participants," explains Professor Takeda, "as was a late wake-up time."

Given that interpersonal stressors arising from competition activities were associated with [sleep disorders](#), new strategies for improving these relationships could help improve sleep quality in visually impaired athletes. Further, strategies to help athletes adjust their wake-up time may have a positive effect on [sleep](#) quality.

More information: Takafumi Monma et al, Prevalence and risk factors of sleep disorders in visually impaired athletes, *Sleep Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.sleep.2020.11.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2020.11.011)

Provided by University of Tsukuba

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