A prospective study of sleep problems in children with ADHD

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Abstract

Background
Behavioral sleep problems are common in children with ADHD, yet their persistence or otherwise is unknown. We examined behavioral sleep problem trajectories, types of sleep problems experienced and associated risk/protective factors.

Methods Design
Prospective cohort study. Setting: 21 pediatric practices across Victoria, Australia. Participants: 195 children with ADHD (5-13 years). Outcomes: Sleep problem trajectories, classified as never, transient or persistent on the basis of sleep problem severity measured at baseline, 6, and 12 months. Explanatory variables: types of sleep problems, internalizing and externalizing co-morbidities, ADHD symptom severity and medication use, autism spectrum disorder, caregiver mental health and socio-demographic factors. Analyses: Multinomial logistic regression models.

Results
Sleep problems fluctuated over 12 months but for 10% of children they persisted. In adjusted analyses, co-occurring internalizing and externalizing co-morbidities was a risk factor for persistent (OR 9.2, 95% CI 1.6, 53.9, p=0.01) and transient (OR 3.7, 95% CI 1.5, 8.8, p=0.003) sleep problems; whilst greater ADHD symptom severity and poorer caregiver mental health were risk factors for persistent and transient sleep problems, respectively.

Conclusions
Sleep problems in children with ADHD are commonly transient but in a subgroup they are characterized as persistent. Early preventive/intervention strategies should target children at risk for persistent sleep problems.