

A self-help program delivered online can improve insomnia in adults

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A cognitive behavioral intervention for insomnia delivered via the Internet can significantly improve insomnia in adults, according to a research abstract that will be presented on Wednesday at SLEEP 2008, the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies.

The study, authored by Lee Ritterband, PhD, of the University of Virginia, focused on 44 participants (mostly female) with an average age of 45 years. The participants were randomly selected to either the cognitive behavioral intervention for insomnia via the Internet or a wait list control. Measures of sleep, mood, cost, and cognitive functioning were collected at pre- and post-treatment, while additional measures of sleep were collected throughout treatment.

According to the results, sleep improved significantly for those who received a cognitive behavioral intervention for insomnia via the Internet over the six-week intervention, whereas control participants showed no change during the treatment period. Sleep efficiency also significantly improved for the experimental group from pre- to post- assessment, with no change for the controls. The experimental group increased total sleep time by 80 minutes and the control group increased by nine minutes.

“We believe these types of Web-based treatment programs have the potential to impact countless individuals around the world,” said Dr. Ritterband. “Specifically related to insomnia, the availability of non-pharmacological help is significantly lacking. The Internet has already

become a critical source of health-care and medical information. The Internet may prove an effective tool to more broadly disseminate cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia.”

Insomnia is a classification of sleep disorders in which a person has trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or waking up too early. It is the most commonly reported sleep disorder. About 30 percent of adults have symptoms of insomnia. It is more common among elderly people and women.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) helps you change actions or thoughts that hurt your ability to sleep well. It helps you develop habits that promote a healthy pattern of sleep.

CBT is most often used for people who suffer from insomnia.

SleepEducation.com, a patient education Web site created by the AASM, provides information about various sleep disorders, the forms of treatment available, recent news on the topic of sleep, sleep studies that have been conducted and a listing of sleep facilities.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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