

RESEARCH SUMMARY:

Sleep Problems Under-detected by Developmental-Behavioral Pediatricians

Sleep difficulties in children are related to problems with mood, attention, behavior, learning, and health, as well as family stress. In previous research studies, over half of children with conditions such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are reported to have sleep problems.

In this study, 67 developmental-behavioral pediatricians at 12 different academic medical centers completed surveys about the type of care that they had provided to patients with ADHD and/or ASD. We reviewed those surveys to determine the percentage of children with ASD and/or ADHD who had sleep problems addressed at clinic visits. It was found that, on average, 20 percent of these patients were reported to have a sleep problem or to have received an intervention designed to improve sleep. Across the 12 medical centers, there was a large range in the detection of sleep problems by developmental-behavioral pediatricians, from a low of 2 percent to a high of 40 percent.

Although children with ADHD and/or ASD commonly have sleep problems, many developmental-behavioral pediatric practices may not be detecting these problems. Care plans need to be developed to address sleep problems in this vulnerable group of children.

Reference:

Won DC, Feldman HM, Huffman LC. Sleep Problem Detection and Documentation in Children with ASD and ADHD by Developmental-Behavioral Pediatricians: A DBPNet Study. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*. 2019;40(1):20-31. PMID: 30339559.