E3-13: Disturbed Sleep and Risk Behavior in Low-Income Minority Teens

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**Abstract:**
**Introduction:** Sleep is particularly important for brain maturation and sleep deprivation in teens has a potent negative effect on behavior, emotion, and attention. Adolescents tend to experience more problems with sleep loss as a natural consequence of puberty, but teens from impoverished
urban areas witness violence and experience stressors that are likely to affect sleep. The purpose of this study was to examine reports of sleep disturbance in very low income youth (N = 20,716; age range = 9.75-19.25 years) in the Mobile Youth Survey (MYS).

Method(s): The MYS is a longitudinal household study of impoverished inner-city adolescents that has a very high repeat participation rate (~85%). Data from the years 1998-2005 were used to compare sequential surveys (2-year increments). The measure of sleep disturbance captured aspects of both insomnia and nightmares, and was elicited by a question about how sleep was affected “when bad things happen to a friend or a family member”.

Results: Growth curve analysis showed that reports of sleep disturbance decreased incrementally from age 10 - 18 years, and that after age 10 boys had consistently lower levels of sleep disturbance than girls. Using a cross-lagged panel multivariate approach comparing reports by subject for sequential years and controlling for age/gender, sleep disturbance was associated with violent behavior (carrying, using gun/knife) quick temperedness, worry, and belief in the neighborhood Street Code in the subsequent year. Conversely, worry, traumatic stress, a quick temper, a positive attitude toward the neighborhood and identification with the Street Code were associated with sleep disruption, which can then lead to high-risk behavior.

Discussion & Conclusions: These results suggest a partial explanation for the negative effect of socioeconomic status on sleep among low-income adolescents. Research is needed to determine the prevalence of sleep disorders in this high-risk population and the longitudinal effects of disturbed sleep on violence, emotional and academic outcomes.

Abstract History:
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