

Insomnia – underestimated, underdiagnosed and mismanaged?

A study protocol for an investigation into patients' sleep problems, treatments and preferences within health care

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INTRODUCTION

Insomnia is a growing public health issue. Besides leading to individual suffering and reduced daytime functioning, it has been shown to be a risk factor for developing anxiety and depression [1, 2]. Studies have shown an increase in sleep problems in the Swedish population from around 20% to 30% over 20 years and around 7% of adults in Sweden use sleep medications [3]. A study from Norway found that 48% of patients in primary care waiting rooms met diagnostic criteria for chronic insomnia and 18% used hypnotics [4]. Additionally, we know that 50-70% of psychiatric patients suffer from insomnia [5]. This indicates a much larger insomnia problem in the primary and specialist care population than in the general population.

The aim of this study is to investigate the prevalence of insomnia and sleep medication prescriptions in primary and specialist care in Sweden, as well as physicians' and patients' attitudes and preferences regarding treatment. We hypothesise that insomnia is underdiagnosed, undertreated and not managed in accordance with international guidelines.

RESULTS

Questionnaires will be administered to 4000 patients in primary care waiting rooms in 20 Swedish cities, to estimate the prevalence of insomnia disorder, co-morbid disorders, potential ongoing insomnia treatment and treatment preferences. Questionnaires regarding knowledge and attitudes about insomnia will also be administered to primary care physicians. Patient records will be analysed and registry data used to map prescriptions of sleep medication and insomnia diagnoses in primary and specialist care. Data from primary care clinics will also be analysed for possible predicting factors.

This study is the first of its kind in Sweden, estimating the prevalence of insomnia and sleep medication prescription in primary and specialist care. The outcomes of this study will include determining the prevalence of insomnia and the frequency of hypnotic prescriptions in primary and specialist care. Additionally, the study will investigate the proportion of patients who are prescribed sleep medication and also have a diagnosed sleep disorder, and vice versa. The study will also inform on physician and patient knowledge, attitudes and preferences regarding insomnia treatment and possible variables predicting the management of insomnia.

CONCLUSION

In this project we will produce and report data on how insomnia is regarded and treated in Sweden, which can help guide policy makers, health care providers and patients in decisions regarding the management of insomnia.



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