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Centre for Neuro Skills Study Finds Differences in Sleep Patterns Between Men and Women with Post-Traumatic Brain Injury

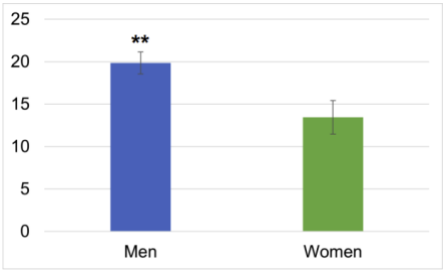
Incidental finding indicates Melatonin helps post-acute TBI patients achieve longer REM sleep

Bakersfield, Calif. (Mar. 4) – Centre for Neuro Skills (CNS), a premier provider of traumatic and acquired brain injury rehabilitation services, has shared findings from a study researching sleep-wake disturbances, published in Neurotrauma Reports on January 3, 2024. They found that sleep deficits are correlated with poorer brain injury patient outcomes (verbal skills, depression issues), as monitored by therapists and administrators at CNS.

The study included data from 57 individuals between the ages of 18-70 who sustained traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). CNS collected the data between 2018-2020 at its in-house sleep centers in Dallas and Bakersfield.

Centre for Neuro Skills sleep center in Dallas Fort Worth

"Overall, we found that lack of REM sleep negatively impacts memory and learning for TBI patients," says Dr. Stefanie Howell, a neuroscientist at CNS. "In research, we must also consider additional variables that may impact our results. This includes biological variables such as sex, as biological sex does impact sleep. Our research found that women achieve REM sleep far less than men. Additionally, a decrease in REM sleep was associated with poorer learning and memory task performance, indicating a potential impact on outcome and recovery."



Women showed a significant reduction in percentage of REM sleep

In addition to biological sex, CNS evaluated several sleep medications to determine if their use impacted sleep for the TBI patients. Howell said "medications do not seem to be impacting results between men and women; however, the use of melatonin was associated with improved REM sleep and may therefore be of potential short-term benefit to TBI patients. It is important to note that over-the-counter melatonin options are variable due to formula ingredients."

"Through research, we've found that while sleep supplements in the benzodiazepine family may cause someone to fall asleep, they suppress REM sleep, which is crucial for memory recollection and improved learning," says Dr. Brent Masel, executive vice president of medical affairs at CNS. "Melatonin was found to help improve REM sleep in the short term, but it's important to note that long-term use can be habit-forming. I cannot stress this enough – the best medication is no medication."

In 2021, CNS published two other studies regarding sleep-wake disturbances post-stroke. The first evaluated the incidence of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and the second study considered the anatomical location of the injury (stroke).

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About Centre for Neuro Skills

Centre for Neuro Skills is an experienced and respected world leader in providing intensive rehabilitation and medical programs for those recovering from all types of brain injury. CNS covers a full spectrum of advanced care from residential and assisted living to outpatient/day treatment. Founded by Dr. Mark Ashley in 1980, CNS has seven locations in California and Texas. For more information about Centre for Neuro Skills, visit: www.neuroskills.com, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube.

Media, please note: Visual assets, including photos, are available. To request an interview with CNS leadership or clinical staff, please contact Robin Carr at 415.766.0927 or CNS@landispr.com.

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