

The Relationship Between Sleep and Health Measures in College Students

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ABSTRACT

College students have been known to get little sleep throughout the process of obtaining their degrees. This poor sleep quality has been shown to correlate to higher levels of depression and mental health issues. Additionally, sleep quality in college students is related to various physical variables which are further explored in this study. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between hours of sleep and various health measures of college students. **METHODS:** This study was a correlational study examining the relationship between hours of sleep and demographic variables of college students. Subjects were recruited from classes at a small, private Texas university. Upon completion of the informed consent subjects were asked to complete a series of questions, one of those being "On average how many hours of sleep per night do you get?" (HrsSleep). After completing the questions resting heart rate (RHR), blood pressure (SysBP and DiaBP), height (Ht), and weight (Wt) were measured. **RESULTS:** The study consisted of 49 college students (age = 22.76 ± 6.19). There was a significant negative relationship between HrsSleep and Wt ($r = -0.46$, $p = <.001$), HrsSleep and SysBP ($r = -0.31$, $p = .03$), HrsSleep and DiaBP ($r = -0.30$, $p = .04$) and HrsSleep and Ht ($r = -0.31$, $p = .03$). There was no significant relationship between HrsSleep and RHR ($r = -0.17$, $p = .22$) and HrsSleep and age ($r = 0.14$, $p = 0.34$). **CONCLUSION:** The study demonstrates that sleep has significant correlations to various health measures in college students. It was found that less sleep is related to higher blood pressure and increased weight. Increased blood pressure and weight can contribute to secondary health conditions that could be experienced by college students. Given the results of this study one way to potentially alleviate these secondary health conditions would be to encourage college students to get more sleep. The research also indicated that taller individuals got less sleep. Obviously, one cannot adjust their height, however, taller college students should be encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices that foster good sleep habits. In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that getting enough sleep could serve to improve some health measures in college students.