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News Release

1 in 4 Americans Develop Insomnia Each Year

Penn study finds about 75 percent of those with insomnia recover normal sleep

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BALTIMORE – About 25 percent of Americans experience acute insomnia each year, but about 75 percent of these individuals recover without developing persistent poor sleep or chronic insomnia, according to a study from researchers at the [Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania](#) which will be presented Monday at [SLEEP 2018, the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies LLC \(APSS\)](#).

The new study offers the latest data on the prevalence of acute insomnia, which is characterized by difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep for as little as three nights per week for at least two consecutive weeks up to three months. Insomnia becomes chronic when it occurs at least three nights a week for more than three months.

“Whether caused by stress, illness, medications, or other factors, poor sleep is very common,” said senior author [Michael Perlis, PhD](#), an associate professor of Psychiatry and director of the Behavioral Sleep Medicine program. “These findings reveal new insights about the paths that acute insomnia takes and can inform interventions that target poor sleep and help people recover sustained sufficient sleep.”

The findings, (#0359) will be presented at [SLEEP 2018, the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies LLC \(APSS\)](#) in Baltimore.

Although some studies have offered the prevalence of insomnia symptoms in large populations, to date this is the first study to offer data on transitions of good sleepers (GS) – defined as those needing fewer than 15 minutes to fall asleep and/or who spend fewer than 15 minutes awake during the night on five or more nights per week. The study specifically determines how GS transition to acute insomnia (AI), to persistent poor sleep (PPS) – i.e., recurring bouts of AI without sustained recovery or turning to chronic insomnia (CI), to chronic insomnia, and how many of those affected by AI recover.



A total of 1,435 adults were recruited nationwide and tracked for one year during 2015-2017. They were verified as good sleepers over the first three months of the study and assessed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis for one full year. The subjects kept a daily sleep diary for the duration of the study, allowing for a uniquely detailed level of insight into how sleep varies from day to day. Also, regular assessments were made regarding participants' daytime function, stress and life events, and medical and mental health.

Among the 25 percent experiencing acute insomnia, about 75 percent of subjects recovered good sleep within 12 months, while 21 percent remained poor sleepers with recurring bouts of AI, and about 6 percent developed chronic insomnia. No significant differences were observed along racial, ethnic, or gender lines, or among people of varying incomes or BMI.

The new data provides researchers with how many people experience AI each year, as well as how those cases progress, laying the groundwork for additional research now underway to assess what factors predict recovery (resilience) and non-recovery (persistent poor sleep or the new onset of chronic insomnia).

The findings will be presented during the poster session on Tuesday, June 5, from 3:15-3:30 pm in room 337 at the Baltimore Convention Center.

Previous research from the Perlis team has shown that suicides are more likely to occur after midnight than during the daytime or evening and another study showing that more sleep reduces suicide risk in those with insomnia.

This work was funded by the National Institutes of Health (R01AG041783) and by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-061-25-0120-A).

In addition to Perlis, additional authors include lead author **Amy Gencarelli**, as well as **Waliuddin Khader**, **Knashawn H. Morales**, **Ivan Vargas**, and **Jaqueline Kloss**, from Penn, as well as Michael Grandner from the University of Arizona, and Jason Ellis from Northumbria University.

TOPIC: **Sleep Medicine**

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