



PRESS RELEASE

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Who's Not Sleeping? Insomnia Accounts for 13.6% of Days Lost to Chronic Conditions

Insomnia is associated with an estimated 590 million days a year that are lost to US adults each year, according to a new study.

Most, if not all, people have difficulty falling or staying asleep every once in a while, but the prevalence of insomnia is surprisingly high – up to 23% of the US population. In addition, it is highly comorbid, meaning that it occurs quite frequently with other chronic physical and mental disorders.

Insomnia, either alone or in conjunction with its comorbid conditions, impairs the ability of individuals to function in their daily lives, where they may call in sick to work or be unable to carry out their normal activities. The World Health Organization developed a measure to quantify these losses, measured as “days out of role”.

Researchers conducting the America Insomnia Survey used this measure to evaluate the days out of role associated with insomnia. They surveyed thousands of US adults who were part of a commercial health insurance plan and asked them about insomnia and a list of 21 other physical and mental disorders that are commonly comorbid with insomnia.

They found that insomnia is associated with 29.4% of all days out of role, which is equivalent to 590 million days a year among US adults. When accounting for the comorbid conditions, insomnia alone is associated with 13.6% of all days out of role, equivalent to 244 million of those days.

Senior author Dr. Ronald Kessler of Harvard Medical School further explained their findings: “The examination of comorbidity shows that insomnia is not only a very common symptom of many other physical and mental disorders, but also a syndrome in its own right that is associated with high impairment even after adjusting for comorbidity. Indeed, other than chronic pain, insomnia is associated with more days out of role than any other condition examined in this large national study.”

It is important to point out that these findings are associations, and do not necessarily mean that insomnia caused the lost days. However, the findings are still vital to the field, commented Dr. John Krystal, Editor of *Biological Psychiatry*, since “psychiatry tends to focus on disability related to the

disorder rather than to the specific symptom. In this case, whether by itself or in the context of a comorbid psychiatric condition, insomnia was an important contributor to disability. As insomnia is a treatable condition, this type of study highlights a potential lack of access to effective treatment for many affected people."

It seems clear that successful insomnia treatment would have at least some effect on reducing the days out of role that insomnia sufferers experience.

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Notes to Editors:

The article is "Days-Out-of-Role Associated With Insomnia and Comorbid Conditions in the America Insomnia Survey" by Goeran Hajak, Maria Petukhova, Matthew D. Lakoma, Catherine Coulouvrat, Thomas Roth, Nancy A. Sampson, Victoria Shahly, Alicia C. Shillington, Judith J. Stephenson, James K. Walsh, and Ronald C. Kessler. Hajak is affiliated with Teaching Hospital of the University of Erlangen, Bamberg, Germany. Petukhova, Lakoma, Sampson, Shahly, and Kessler are affiliated with Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts. Coulouvrat is with Sanofi-Aventis, Paris, France. Roth is with Henry Ford Health System, Detroit, Michigan. Shillington is with Epi-Q, Oak Brook, Illinois. Stephenson is with HealthCore, Wilmington, Delaware. Walsh is with St. Luke's Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri. The article appears in *Biological Psychiatry*, Volume 70, Number 11 (December 1, 2011), published by Elsevier.

Full text of the article mentioned above is available upon request. Contact Donna Santaromita at d.santaromita@elsevier.com to obtain a copy. To schedule an interview, contact:

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The authors' disclosures of financial and conflicts of interests are available in the article.

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