PTSD May Be Affected by Sleep Disorders in Some Patients

Scottsdale, Ariz. — Untreated sleep-disordered breathing may perpetuate post-traumatic stress disorder over a period of weeks, months, and even years, Dr. Louis E. Krahn reported at a meeting on sleep medicine sponsored by the American College of Chest Physicians.

“Patients have a lot of sleep complaints. They have trouble falling asleep, they have nightmares, and very one interesting finding of late is they also have a fairly high rate of obstructive sleep apnea,” said Dr. Krahn, chair of the department of psychiatry and psychology at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz.


Stresses of everyday life that might influence sleep—such as marital discord and the stress of caring for a relative who died of a heart attack—were shown to have a significant impact on sleep in patients with PTSD, she said. “When people are under stress, their sleep is more disturbed,” she added.

A key finding in this study was that sleep and sleep patterns were influenced by stress in patients with PTSD. "We have found that sleep in PTSD patients is associated with sleep onset latency, sleep duration, and sleep efficiency," she said.

The key to improving sleep in PTSD patients is to reduce stress, she said. "We have found that sleep in PTSD patients is associated with sleep onset latency, sleep duration, and sleep efficiency," she said.

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