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Briefing Series on the Role of Psychology in Health Care *Pediatric Sleep Disorders*

- Sleep problems occur in about 10-30% of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers^{1, 2} and up to 35% of adolescents.³ These prevalence rates can increase significantly depending on cross-cultural differences⁴ and the presence of neurodevelopmental or psychiatric comorbidities.⁵
- Inadequate sleep and poor-quality sleep in children and adolescents have been associated with decreased quality of life,⁶ poor academic performance,⁷ anxiety and depression,⁸ deficits in cognitive and behavioral functioning,⁹ obesity,¹⁰ a potential increased risk of automobile crash and pedestrian injuries,¹¹ and social/emotional skills deficits.¹² Experimental studies confirm these are cause-effect relationships.^{13, 14} Parents/caregivers also are significantly affected by their children's poor sleep. Maternal mood, fatigue, sleep quality, parenting stress, and daytime sleepiness are worse when children do not sleep well.^{15, 16}
- Parents report losing an average of about 35 minutes' sleep per night due to child awakenings.¹⁷ Untreated, bedtime and sleep problems can become chronic, are rarely outgrown,³ and can persist throughout childhood and adolescence.¹⁸ Causes for pediatric insomnia are rarely purely physiologic in nature,¹⁹ thus highlighting the importance of targeted psychological interventions.

| How Psychologists Can Help

- Psychologists are the leading specialists to implement first-line empirically supported treatments for pediatric behavioral sleep problems^{20, 21, 33, 36} and to adapt these interventions for special populations, such as children with comorbid chronic medical illnesses.^{22, 23} These treatments also have been shown to decrease parental stress and improve marital satisfaction, parental sleep, efficacy, and mood.^{24, 25}
- Psychological interventions for insomnia in young and older adults are effective, and results are more durable than medications.³⁸ Young adults with chronic insomnia have greater health care utilization (e.g. physician visits, prescription and over-the-counter medication) than normal sleepers, so early identification and intervention may help to reduce these costs.³⁹
- Psychologists are trained in the evaluation and treatment of cognitive and mental health conditions that often coexist with pediatric sleep disturbances such as such attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, academic/learning challenges, and substance abuse.^{26, 27, 28}

- Psychologists provide behavioral interventions to improve adherence with medical treatments, such as continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) for pediatric sleep apnea.^{29, 30, 31}
- Psychologists have taken lead roles in the development of accreditation guidelines for sleep psychology training programs and certification of sleep psychologists.^{36, 37}

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