



New Trends
in Psychology

Mental Effects of Insomnia or How Acute Sleep Deprivation Affects our Lives

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Abstract: Insomnia is a sleep disorder manifested by difficulty falling asleep, waking up during the night or poor-quality sleep. Insomnia is a medical condition that manifests itself regardless of the degree of fatigue, in many situations people suffering from insomnia feel tired, but cannot fall asleep. Stress, anxiety and depression are among the common causes of chronic insomnia. The brain is not “asleep” during the night. He works to restore the body, and rest is essential to this process. Sleep is divided into several stages, which follow one after the other: stages 1, 2, 3, which represent non-REM sleep, and then REM sleep.

Keywords: insomnia; sleep disorders; stages; treatment; melatonin

1. Introduction

We live in an era in which work, relationships, stress prevail at every step, so our ability to rest decreases vehemently every day.

What is insomnia?

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that is manifested by difficulty falling asleep, waking up during the night or poor-quality sleep. According to data, more than 50% of Romanians sleep less than 7-8 hours a night and more than 75% suffer from exhaustion. Considered one of the most common modern diseases, left untreated,

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insomnia can affect the cardiovascular system, decrease concentration and increase the risk of obesity.

Symptoms and causes of insomnia

Insomnia refers to the inability to fall asleep or to maintain sleep during the night, so that the person affected by insomnia will have a shallow, unrefreshing sleep. **Insomnia is a medical condition** that manifests itself regardless of the degree of fatigue, in many situations people suffering from insomnia feel tired, but are unable to fall asleep.

Symptoms of insomnia include:

- Difficulty falling asleep despite feeling tired
- Frequent awakenings during the night
- Difficulty falling asleep after night-time awakenings
- Unrefreshing sleep, even after a satisfactory number of hours of sleep, the person wakes up in the morning tired
- Need to take sleeping pills or consume alcohol to fall asleep
- Waking up too early in the morning
- Daytime sleepiness, tiredness, irritability
- Difficulty concentrating on daily activities, whatever their nature (domestic, professional).

The causes of insomnia are multiple, can coexist and influence each other:

- **Stress, anxiety and depression are among the common causes of chronic insomnia.** Trauma and physical or emotional abuse are significant risk factors. Also, some intense emotional states (anger, excessive worry) can cause acute insomnia and/or exacerbate chronic insomnia.
- The existence of certain diseases can disturb the quality of sleep: asthma, allergies, Parkinson's disease, hyperthyroidism, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GERD), kidney disease, cancer, as well as chronic pain caused by various pathologies, for example arthritis.

- **Taking medication prescribed by a doctor:** antidepressants, corticosteroids, thyroid hormones, medication for high blood pressure, including some contraceptives.

- **Existence of other sleep disorders** - insomnia itself is a sleep disorder, but it may be caused by another untreated sleep disorder, for example obstructive sleep apnoea or restless legs syndrome. Primary insomnia is not associated with other medical conditions. Secondary insomnia may be caused by some medical problems, such as those mentioned above.

2. Sleep Stages

The brain is not “asleep” during the night. It works to restore the body, and rest is essential to this process. Sleep is divided into several stages, which follow one after the other: stages 1, 2, 3, which represent non-REM sleep, and then REM sleep.

Stage 1 - the first phase of sleep is a shallow sleep, in which a person lies with their eyes closed, but any noise can wake them up. It lasts 5-10 minutes;

Stage 2 - body temperature and heart rate decrease in preparation for deep sleep;

Stage 3 - deep sleep sets in from which the person may be woken more slowly;

REM sleep - occurs 90 minutes after falling asleep and the first phase lasts about 10 minutes. Thereafter, each stage becomes longer and longer, with the last stage lasting up to 60 minutes. It is during this stage that dreams occur.

Treatment

Depending on the causes involved in the onset of insomnia and sleep disorders in general, the treatment may consist of:

- Administration of adjuvants such as **melatonin**, especially indicated for patients who have trouble falling asleep, but who can subsequently maintain uninterrupted sleep.
- In the case of chronic insomnia associated with health problems, treatment is recommended by the specialist (depending on the pathology) and directly addresses the condition in question in order to keep it under control - allergies, asthma, obstructive sleep apnoea

• In the case of patients with chronic insomnia without association with other medical conditions, a complex consultation is indicated. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends a medical examination to rule out suspicion of the presence of any medical conditions, a history that includes the patient's medical history, including psychiatric history. For patients with chronic insomnia, medication, cognitive-behavioural therapy or mixed treatment: pharmacological and cognitive-behavioural therapy is prescribed.

• **Sleeping pills, antidepressants and antihistamines** are administered on the doctor's recommendation.

• **Meditation, exploration of relaxation** techniques can be effective in treating insomnia, especially if it is caused by stressful experiences, major changes involving strong emotions and feelings.

Sleep medicine is a medical super-specialty. Research in this field has intensified over the last decade and a half as more and more people around the world are experiencing difficulty falling asleep and maintaining uninterrupted sleep. Today, the effects of disturbed, unrefreshing sleep at the cellular and subcellular level are investigated, as well as the effects of sleep deprivation on the whole body: metabolically, in gene expression and on hormonal regulation.

Insomnia and sleep disorders are medical conditions that require diagnosis and treatment in order to avoid further health problems and to maintain quality of life.

Personally, the times in which we live are very fast, so we can't turn back to ourselves...because of this, the only time we are with our self is when we want to rest. Thus, all thoughts, emotions, experiences accumulated during the day are cooled at night...I believe that only with the help of deep introspection and the elimination of stressors in our lives we can reach homeostasis. Acceptance comes with many gifts that our soul and body implicitly, are waiting for.

Finally, the return to ourselves is one of the greatest challenges but also a guaranteed success, only then we will be able to truly rest.

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