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Depression link to traumatic brain injury

Nick O'Donoghue

PEOPLE who have suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) have a higher risk of depression and sleep disturbances than others a new study revealed.

A team of researchers from the School of Psychology and Psychiatry at Monash University monitored the sleep of 23 patients who had suffered a TBI and compared them to 23 healthy people with no history of trauma.

Study leader Associate Professor Shantha Rajaratnam noted patients with TBI showed increased sleep disturbance, reported poorer quality sleep, higher anxiety and depressive symptoms than the healthy group.

"These results suggest that TBI

may disrupt the brain structures that regulate sleep, including the production of melatonin. Patients with TBI showed decreased sleep efficiency and increased periods of being awake after trying to sleep," Associate Prof Rajaratnam said.

Researchers said the sleep disturbances may be caused by injury related damage to the sleep/wake regulating centres and associated pathways or neurotransmitter systems.

The study also revealed that TBI patients spent more time in a stage of sleep called slow-wave sleep or deep sleep.

Those with brain injury spent an average of 24 percent of their time in slow-wave sleep, compared to 20 percent of the time for healthy participants.

They were also awake more after initially falling asleep, averaging 62 minutes per night awake compared to 27 minutes for the healthy group.

"What we're seeing here is a complex, bidirectional relationship between sleep and mood disturbances.

"Disturbed sleep increases the risk of depression, and likewise depression is known to cause sleep disruption – even in patients who haven't experienced TBI.

"However, when the influence of anxiety and depression symptoms were statistically controlled, sleep quality still remained lower in patients with TBI," Associate Prof Rajaratnam said.

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Communication key to preventing errors

Nick O'Donoghue

MEDICATION errors may be reduced by pharmacists playing an active role in chronic pain management, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) vice president Dr Lisa Nissen said.

As co-presenter of the PSA's FOCUS 2 chronic pain management program Dr Nissen has encouraged pharmacists to take part and find out how they can help patients with chronic pain.

The program provides pharmacists with the opportunity to gain a better understand pain management, mitigate risk and improve health outcomes for people living with chronic non-cancer pain.

"Pharmacists have always played a role in the management of



Chronic pain: PSA vice president Lisa Nissen

chronic pain, but what is changing is the understanding that to really contribute, we need to spend a lot more time doing it and we need to take the time to talk to our patients.

"Unbranded education programs, like FOCUS 2 Pharmacy, help develop a deeper understanding of the management of chronic pain and

this helps the pharmacist better help their patients", said she said.

Dr Nissen's co-presenter, UK based advanced pharmacy practitioner Dr Roger Knaggs said opioid related medication errors usually occur because of dosing mistakes, confusion over drugs with similar sounding names and the inadvertent substitution of a slow release presentation for an immediate release alternative.

"Medication errors with opioids generally occur around the time of initiation of therapy, during dose conversion from one opioid to another or with an inappropriate dose increase for a patient already taking an opioid.

"In the community setting, errors can occur when prescriptions are written using the generic name only," he said.

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Support pharmacy only: Guild

Nick O'Donoghue

SUPPORTING pharmacy only products will help reinforce pharmacists' credentials and value, Pharmacy Guild of Australia president Kos Scavos said.

Speaking after the announcement that Boehringer Ingelheim has decided to continue distributing its natural soluble fibre product Dulcofibre only through pharmacies, Mr Scavos said it offered pharmacists the opportunity to highlight the service available through community pharmacy.

“There is enormous opportunity for community pharmacists to reinforce their credentials and value in the nutritional area. Many consumers do not understand the benefits of fibre and clearly some still do not take enough fibre on a daily basis.

“If our advice and consultations with our customers can be supplemented by high quality products that are available only in pharmacy and are clearly distinguishable from those available in general retail outlets, then that can only reinforce the

value of community pharmacy to customers who are seeking the latest options on fibre supplements.

“I can only encourage pharmacy to support brands that are committed to the pharmacy channel and are consistent with our role as providers of high quality advice,” he said.

Dulcofibre contains glucomannan, a form of fibre that provides high water absorbency to help build stool mass and offers increased gelling capacity to aid its motion.

It also has a prebiotic effect which helps promote the growth of healthy bacteria.

Boehringer Ingelheim division manager of consumer health care Tim Templeman said the decision to distribute Dulcofibre only through pharmacy as sign of the company's commitment to support pharmacists.

“We said when we launched the product that community pharmacy was the most appropriate channel for this kind of product. That is clearly still our view,” he said.

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BRIEFS

MMR DOC BANNED

British doctor Andrew Wakefield, who led research claiming autism was linked to the vaccine for measles mumps and rubella (MMR), has been struck off by the UK's General Medical Council.

He was found guilty of “serious professional misconduct” and banned from practicing medicine in the UK, however the ban does not prevent him from working as a doctor in other countries.

In 1998, Wakefield and colleagues published a study alleging a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. Most of the study authors renounced its conclusions and it was retracted by the journal in February.

SPACE BLOOD PRESSURE TESTING

A new blood pressure monitoring device is being used by astronauts on the International Space Station as part of a range of experiments being carried out on board.

Since late 2009 the astronauts on the International Space Station have been using a new Portable Pulmonary Function System (PFS) made by Damed using

SunTech Medical technology as part of a series of respiratory and cardiovascular tests.

The non-invasive portable PFS was one of several diagnostic tools to be used on the space station and can be used to investigate the mechanisms of cardiovascular problems by studying the effects of increased blood volume on blood pressure, heart rate, cardiac output and the neuroendocrine system.

COMPUTERISED HEALTH ASSESSMENT

A computer based health assessment tool developed by the University of Queensland is set to improve the quality and efficiency of hospital care for frail patients.

Professor of Geriatrics, Len Gray, who headed the development of interRAI Acute Care, said the tool provided many benefits for these patients and their clinicians.

Improving and streamlining care for older people is particularly important due to the high percentage of the Australian population that will reach old age at around the same time in the coming years.

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