Linking Daily Dynamics of Irritable Mood and Sleep in a Pediatric Sample: Clinical and Conceptual Implications

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BACKGROUND

- Sleep directly impacts emotion regulation and plays a critical role in psychological health and well-being.
- Inadequate or disrupted sleep are both common symptoms of and risk factors for a range of psychiatric disorders including, most commonly, anxiety and mood disorders.
- Associations between sleep and irritability, an increased proneness to anger and a common and impairing symptom in pediatric psychopathology, are understudied.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Examine real-time, bidirectional associations between irritability and total sleep time (TST).

METHODS

- N = 125
- 26.20% Female, 10.10% Black, 68.80% White, 83.20% Non-Hispanic or Latino
- Age Mean (SD) = 12.58 (2.56)
- Transdiagnostic sample
- Ns: DMDD=37; ADHD=33; Anxiety=28, Controls =27

Ecological Momentary Assessment

Youth and Parents report for 7 days:
- Bed and wake times (for TST)
- Waking and evening irritability:
  - Frustation, grouchiness, anger
  - Mood change

- High compliance rate
  (Child: 83%; Parent: 84%)
- ARI : Affective Reactivity Index (Stringaris et al., 2012)

CONCLUSIONS

- Findings suggest some specificity for TST-irritability associations versus other EMA mood items.
- Sleep insufficiency may serve as a potential treatment target to improve daily irritability in pediatric youth (i.e., via sleep education).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Disentangle effects of irritability vs. those of ADHD.
- Integrate with objective measures.
- Just-in-time interventions.

REFERENCES