Title: Sleep and Depression in Undergraduate College Students Over Time

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Purpose:
The high stress and numerous commitments college students experience often results in constricted time, and therefore less time available for sleep. College students report depressive symptoms that are consistent with levels reported in the general population, but they are less likely to seek help than the general population. Chronic sleep restriction can increase the risk for depressive symptoms in college students. This study sought to understand this relationship over time in undergraduate students at a research intensive university.

Methods:
This 12-week longitudinal study measured undergraduate sleep quality and depressive symptoms at three time points during the semester. Measurements were taken at baseline, 8 and 12 weeks. Full time students from the University of Texas at Austin were enrolled. The instruments used were the Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CESD) scale.

Findings:
62 students enrolled in the study and completed baseline measurements, 53 students completed 2 measurement points and 42 students completed all three measurements.
Students were primarily female (90%), Latino (27%) or Caucasian (60%), freshmen (46%) or sophomores (32%), and living on (51%) or near (46%) the campus. Most of the students are majoring in nursing (52%), Natural Sciences (16%), or Business & Liberal Arts (16%), while 8% were undeclared. At baseline, students reported moderate insomnia levels (m=9;sd=4) Students also reported moderate depressive symptoms (m=16;sd=11). Sleep and depressive symptoms had a strong and positive correlation. (r=0.61; p=.000).

**Conclusions:**

Students at research-intensive universities often forgo sleep in sacrifice for studying or extracurricular, and thus suffer the consequences of impaired daytime function and depressive symptoms. Sleep may be the key to help students help themselves function better throughout the day and improve their mood.