

The understanding and challenges of sleep problems in people with learning disabilities

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Sleep problems in the typically developing population are increasingly being recognised as having far reaching consequences at both a health and economical level. Most sleep problems are increased for a variety of reasons in populations with neurodevelopmental problems, Mental health problems and learning disability. The trajectories of these are not always clearly understood but if present can have a profound impact on the individual and carers. New research into the genomic regulation of sleep and drivers of sleep as well as better research into management of “insomnia” has meant better understanding and some methodologies for intervening. There is good evidence for the management of airway obstruction in disorders such a Pierre Robin sequence has resulted in an increase in cognitive functioning. Clear understanding of the phenotype or personality of the individual determines personalised management of non-airway disorders, often with better success. These personalised plans focus on adaption of sleep principles in line with particular attributes of the individuals and carers involved. The impact of improving sleep is well known in the general population but not as clear in populations with learning disabilities or those with particular phenotypes.