Risk of Sleep Disturbances: A Comparison of College Student Athletes to Non-Athletes

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Introduction

Sleep disturbances are a cause of concern for the health of all that suffer from disturbances. This review of literature intends to display that college athletes are more likely to suffer or develop sleep disturbances in comparison to non-college athletes due to strenuous practices, games, travel times to away games, roommates, homework, and social life that all lead to an impact on sleep quality. Sleep starts to become lower on a college athlete’s list of importance once academics and the demand of athletics increases throughout the semester.

The sleep disorder or disturbance that is most commonly seen in people is termed insomnia. It is anticipated that college athletes are more at risk for sleep disturbances than non-college athletes.

Insomnia is a sleep disorder diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5). The DSM-5 states that insomnia is diagnosable when a dissatisfaction of sleep quality or quantity is present and that there has to be a complaint of either having a hard time initiating or maintaining sleep. This diagnosis has to be accompanied by distress or impairment with levels of functioning in everyday life. The impairment of functioning will breach social, academic, behavioral, physical, and job areas.

Not having quality sleep impacts the emotional, physical, and mental health of the body. Sleep resets and helps repair everyday wear and tear on the body. When a quality sleep has been achieved, one will feel better throughout the day and long-term sleep health ensures that the body and mind will be ready for anything the day brings.

Literature Review

College students tend to have lower quality sleep than other age ranges due to the increased amount of homework, job, social elements, and stress. Research performed by Gould et al. (2016) found that younger adults were connected to having inferior day-time dysfunction and having unsatisfactory sleep quality in comparison to older adults.

The psychosocial elements of life and the adjustments of physiological and psychological changes are hard to go through when a person’s sleep is not sufficient enough to keep up with the demands of life. Research done by Cifre et al. (2020) finds that college students with sleep disturbances have a lower academic performance and executive brain functioning.

The research conducted by Knufinkle et al. (2017) finds that elite athletes need to have effective sleep hygiene to be able to keep performing at top levels. For athletes at a high level, a quality sleep is beneficial for performance and recovery. The findings also suggest that sleep should be focused on being continuously asleep, compared to extending one’s sleep for a longer period of time. Enriching the sleep experience and being able to reduce the amount of time of wake from post sleep onset. The researchers are still questioning whether elite athletes with intense exercise regimen experience the recovery needed for the best performance and recovery for the athlete.

Results and Discussion

The results that were compiled in the research from the literature review supports the hypothesis found in the introduction. Sleep disturbances impact college athletes more due to the level of intensity and schedules.

Studies show that taking care to make sure sleep hygiene is done properly will help decrease sleep disturbances. Having games not be late at night and training sessions not very early in the morning also allows for the decrease of sleep disturbances.

The results of this research are limited to the student and non-student athletes that experience sleep disturbances in their life.

Conclusion and Future Directions

There should be future studies done on how sleep disturbances impact everyone in college, with a focus on college athletes. There should be more information about proper sleep hygiene given to all college students to reduce sleep disturbances that appear.

References