

Sleep Quality in Bipolar Patients

Background: One hallmark of bipolar disorder (BD) is sleep disturbances. BD is associated with accelerated aging and has similar brain structure alterations as typical aging. In non-BD older adults, sleep becomes lighter and more fragmented with longer awakenings. While we know about sleep changes that occur with aging, we have limited information on sleep in older patients with BD. The goal of this study is to examine this population to see if decline in sleep quality with aging is more pronounced in BD.

Methods: Data were collected as part of a 5-year study on inflammatory and mood predictors of cognitive aging in BD at UCSD. Participants were given actigraphy watches, and sleep data were collected. Participants were told to wear it for 14 days/nights each year of the study; data from the initial year of the study were analyzed. The watch collected data on movement and light which were combined with self-reports of sleep times to calculate the sleep variables of interest (mean sleep efficiency, sleep efficiency standard deviation, mean sleep time, and sleep time standard deviation). Those who participated but did not wear the watch for more than 8 days were excluded in analysis (47 BD and 62 non-mentally ill comparison (NC) participants).

Results: The groups were equivalent in age, BMI, and gender ratio but the BD group had statistically lower levels of education than the NC group ($p=0.032$). There was a significant correlation between age and sleep efficiency in both groups (Figure 1). There was no significant difference in any sleep measure between BD and NC nor was there a more pronounced association of sleep quality with age in BD patients.

Conclusions: While there was no significant difference in the apparent rate of decline in sleep quality with age in BD patients, older BD and NC had poorer sleep which, if treated, could improve daily function. It is important to examine the repercussions of poor sleep in order to best provide care for older BD patients.