

SLEEPING 8.5 OR MORE HOURS PER DAY – IS IT TOO MUCH? CHARACTERISTICS OF VERY OLD PERSONS (85+) ACCORDING TO SLEEP DURATION



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Background

The extreme differences in daily sleep duration provoke questions on causality and “normal”/acceptable/recommended ranges.

Specifically, it is often not clear whether and when should sleep duration be taken as a warning signal, especially when a person’s well-being is under the institutional responsibility, as in retirement homes.

Material & Methods

This study aims at determining characteristics differing long (8.5+ hours), short (<6.5 hours), and moderate (6.5-8.0 hours) sleepers (in a 24h cycle) among the very old persons (85+ yrs.).

The self-reported data on 327 persons living in retirement homes in Zagreb has been analyzed (χ^2 -test) contrasting three similarly sized groups: long-sleepers (95), short-sleepers (102), and moderate-sleepers (130).

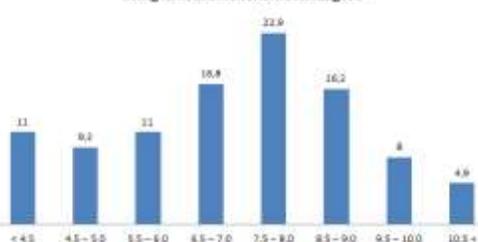
Results

Long-sleepers spend their leisure time more frequently with friends/neighbors ($p=0.013$) and less frequently walking ($p=0.037$). They more frequently declare that somebody is with them during the night ($p=0.020$), that they have help in their everyday activities ($p=0.028$), and they are content with their present life ($p=0.041$). They less frequently think that loneliness is one of the main problems of the elderly ($p=0.033$). Long-sleepers less frequently report a chronic disease ($p=0.033$), and take medications for heart/blood pressure ($p=0.037$).

Short-sleepers more frequently report that they were separated from their families because of their job ($p=0.010$), they are less frequently content with their past life ($p=0.013$), and now receive a lower pension (<4,000 HRK) ($p=0.046$). They more frequently declare that nobody is with them during the evening ($p=0.022$), and their main current problem is the feeling of uselessness ($p=0.037$). Short-sleepers more frequently report depression ($p=0.029$) and a chronic disease ($p=0.047$).

Moderate-sleepers more frequently have higher education ($p=0.028$), report that because of their education they changed their residence ($p=0.046$), and now have a higher pension (4,000-10,000 HRK) ($p=0.036$). They are also more frequently parents ($p=0.046$). Now they less frequently spend their leisure time with friends/neighbors ($p=0.027$). Moderate-sleepers less frequently have heart problems ($p=0.029$) but more frequently have osteoporosis ($p=0.015$).

Sleep duration distribution (%) in 327 very old persons living in retirement homes in Zagreb



Conclusion

The study showed that in long-lived individuals (85+ yrs.) the sleeping duration is not related to sex and age /longevity/ or to the psychotropic drug usage. It is predominantly a reflection of the personality, quality of life, and life-long experience.

The results indicate that the very old persons sleeping less than 6.5 hours are the least content.

The revealed pattern points to the space of intervention that will both bring about sleep prolongation and increase life satisfaction of those persons.

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