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Sleeping habits of an adolescents' population from a Rural Northern Portuguese city

Carla Rodrigues(1), S Rocha(2), AB Figueiredo(3)

(1) UCSP São Neutel, Chaves 1, ACES Alto Tâmega e Barroso, ARS Norte, Portugal

(2) UCSP B, Chaves 1, ACES Alto Tâmega e Barroso, ARS Norte, Portugal

(3) USF das Conchas, ACES Lisboa Norte, ARS LVT, Portugal

Corresponding author: Dr Ana Beatriz Figueiredo, USF Das Conchas, ACES Lisboa Norte, Lisbon, Portugal. E-mail: beatrizfigueiredo41@gmail.com

Background: Sleep is an important physiological activity with a crucial role in several different functions in the human body such as repair, growth, memory consolidation, learning, physical and emotional development. Studies suggest that the adolescents should sleep between 9 to 9.5 hours per day. A poor or insufficient quality of sleep has immediate consequences such as the decreasing of academic performance, slow thinking, memory loss, sleepiness, mood swings, anxiety, low self-esteem and accident-proneness. In Portugal, a study was performed at a Lisbon school involving 470 children/adolescents between 11 and 15 years old (Moreno T., 2012) assessing sleeping habits and the diurnal sleepiness of the adolescent. The results showed that the majority of the children (60,5%) did not sleep more than 8 hours.

Aim: To assess the sleeping habits in the adolescents of a Northern portuguese city and understand how can we improve the quality of their sleep.

Methods: Data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to 8th grade students. The questions included amount and quality of sleep, sleeping conditions and others, regarding academic failure and health issues.

Results: The sample included 159 students (n=159) with ages ranging from 13 to 16 (medium=13,71; standard deviation (SD)=0,66). 81,8% of the individuals report sleeping well, with a medium of 8.33 hours of sleep during school nights (SD=2h05), where 76,73% sleep more than 8h per night. Data also shows a correlation between sleeping well and not sharing a bedroom (p=0,01).

Conclusion: The amount of hours of sleep of this group of adolescents appears to be higher than the national average. The identified factor related to poor sleep is sharing a bedroom and there's no statistical correlation verified between not sleeping well and academic failure, practising sports or having altercations at home.

Keywords: adolescents, sleep behavior, Chaves, Portugal