Development and Validation of a Screening Instrument for Sleep Difficulties in Children with ADHD

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Introduction

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is the most common childhood neurodevelopmental disorder (5-6% of all children) ¹.
- Up to 74% of children with ADHD experience difficulties with sleep – nearly triple the rate compared to children without ADHD ².
- Sleep is critical for health and wellbeing. Problems with sleep during childhood lead to poor academic outcomes, behavioural and social difficulties ³.
- Problems with sleep are poorly recognised in children with ADHD. They are often attributed to other issues, or not recognised at all ⁴.
- Sleep difficulties should be screened in routine ADHD management ⁵ – early identification leads to better outcomes.
- No screening instrument for sleep difficulties has yet been developed or adequately validated for use in children with ADHD ⁶.
- Use of screening instruments that do not consider the unique aspects of ADHD may compromise the ability to accurately identify, and then manage, sleep difficulties for children with ADHD.

Aims

- This program of research will **DEVELOP**, **VALIDATE**, **IMPLEMENT** and **DISSEMINATE** a screening instrument that can assess sleep difficulties in children with ADHD.
- This will be achieved in five stages.

Stages of Research

Systematic Review of the Literature

- Our systematic review of the literature found 15 studies that screened children with ADHD for sleep difficulties published in the last 10 years.
- Five existing measures were used in these studies.
- No measure was validated in the ADHD population.
- Findings justify the development of a new instrument.

Co-Designed Scale Development

- Past research will be used to develop a preliminary list of scale items for review by key stakeholders.
- Clinicians and consumers with expertise and lived experience in ADHD will participate in workshops to help refine and develop the scale.
- Their involvement will help to improve scale relevance.

Pilot Study with Families

- A pilot study involving families who are accessing CAHDS will be used to evaluate the new instrument.
- Participating families will complete the scale, objective measures of sleep quality, and other key information.
- Further refinements to the measure may be made based on the obtained results and family feedback.

Sleep Education Intervention

- Wait-list control intervention will test whether a sleep-based caregiver psychoeducation intervention can improve sleep and related outcomes of children with ADHD. Approximately 10-15 families will be involved.
- The new sleep scale will be used to monitor outcomes.
- This will be delivered by expert clinicians.

Evaluation and Dissemination

- Findings from each of the previous stages will be reviewed and disseminated to the wider population.
- Results will be published in peer-reviewed journals, domestic, and international conferences.
- The scale will be available for clinicians to use as a valid sleep screening instrument for children with ADHD.

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