Relevance of pre-clinical research on drug abuse and Sleep

A relevância da pesquisa pré-clínica sobre drogas de abuso e sono

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TO THE EDITOR:

The article entitled “Sleep and drugs of abuse: overview of preclinical research and new global trends”(1), published by Polesel et al. in the last issue of Sleep Science brings important data regarding the relationship between drug abuse. It deals with two themes that are intimately related, presenting interesting pre-clinical results which increase the comprehension on this relationship, as well as motivate more studies on the field.

This review presents alcohol as the most accessed substance in pre-clinical studies about sleep and drug abuse. This data corroborates the most important epidemiological studies in Brazil, which demonstrate alcohol as the most prevalent substance in general population. Noto et al.(2) says that the study of alcohol abuse is a major public health concern, as this substance is one of the main causes of drug-related hospitalization. This fact can also be observed in previous epidemiological studies. In the II Brazilian Household Survey on Psychotropic Drugs, the prevalence of alcohol consumption in life was 74.6%(3); in the VI Brazilian Survey on Drug Use among Students, the same consumption was about 60.5%(4); and in the Drug Abuse Survey among Undergraduate Students was 86.2%(5).

The aforementioned study raises two possible explanations for the higher number of pre-clinical research involving sleep and alcohol. The first explanation draws upon the depressive effects of alcohol, which has influence over sleep architecture. This factor would be the main factor explaining such production in pre-clinical research. The second explanation, the legality of alcohol consumption, which is present in several countries, has already been demonstrated as a main concern in epidemiological studies. These concerns are not only directed to adults, but also to adolescents, which are starting to use alcohol and other drugs earlier, in a vital cycle of pleasure seeking(6). When we consider that adolescents are in physical and emotional self-construction, this becomes a valuable data regarding to public health. These pre-clinical studies bring fundamental information about alcohol and sleep, as these adolescents are day after day more requested by the modern lifestyle requirements.

Accordingly, this article brings clarifying points for researchers in the field of drug abuse, corroborating previous epidemiological studies and instigating more efforts on the relationship between drugs abuse and sleep. As the article says, several studies have already demonstrated that sleeping is an important factor for a healthy life, but that can also lead to important public health problems. The forthcoming studies about sleep and drug abuse deserve attention, as they will probably be able to develop public policies and prevention strategies to be applied in both fields.

REFERENCES