A Hidden Epidemic of Parasomnias Among Post-Secondary Students: Prevalence and Psychological Correlates

Huanan Liao [2,4], Catherine Fichten [1,2,3,4], Eva Libman [3,4], Sally Bailes [3,4], Mary Jorgensen [2], Alice Havel [1,2], Yuxuan Qin [2,4], Laura Creti [3,4], Bianca Zlotea [1,2], Christine Vo [2], Jillian Budd [2,4], Abigaelle Vasseur [2,4], Tanya Pierre-Sindor [2,4]

[1] Dawson College, [2] Adaptech Research Network, [3] Jewish General Hospital, [4] McGill University

INTRODUCTION

- **Parasomnias**: sleep disorders that involve abnormal behavioral and mental activities at night (e.g., nightmares)
- Research on parasomnias among post-secondary students and young adults is scant
- University students frequently have sleep issues (e.g., insomnia), which are risk factors for development of parasomnias
- Goals:
  1) Investigate one-year prevalence of parasomnias in post-secondary students
  2) Explore relationships between parasomnias, nightmares, psychological distress, and neuroticism

METHODS

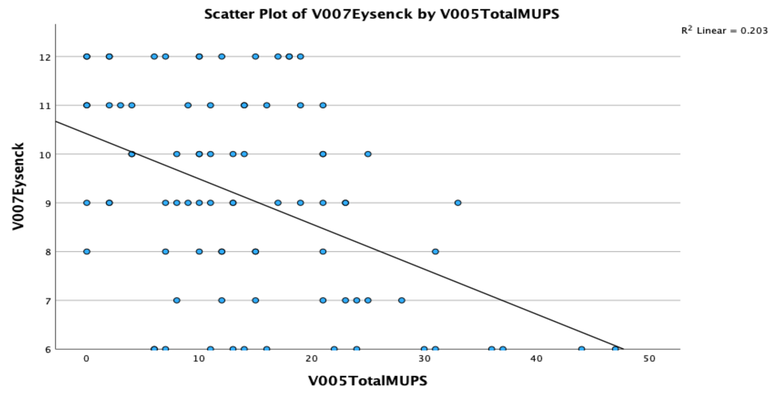
- Online survey
- 85 participants (49 f, 31 m) from post-secondary institutions
- **Munich Parasomnias Screening Questionnaire (MUPS)**: presence/ absence & frequency of 21 parasomnias
- **Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQR)**: neuroticism. Higher score = lower neuroticism
- **Sleep Symptom Checklist (SSC)**: psychological distress

CONCLUSION

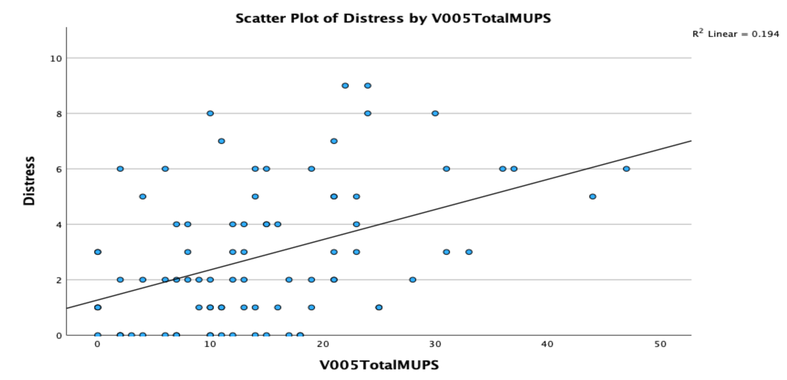
- 93% experienced at least one parasomnia during the past year
- Nightmares were most common
- The more "neurotic" & distressed, the more frequent are parasomnias & nightmares
- 1st investigation in Canada

RESULTS

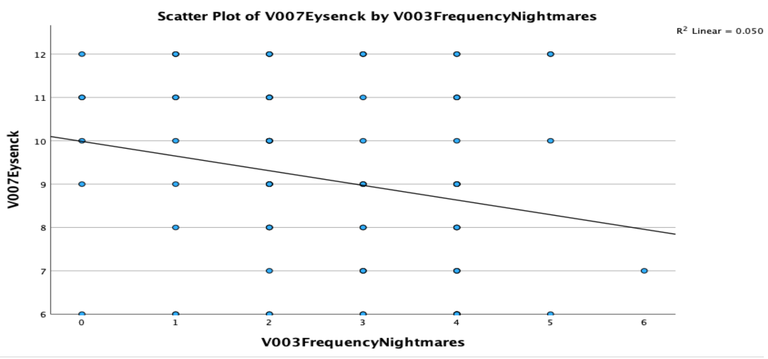
Parasomnia	% with the parasomnia
Nightmares	81%
Hypnic jerks	55%
Sleep talking	39%
Sleep-related bruxism	35%
Nocturnal leg cramps	34%
Rhythmic feet movements	26%
Periodic leg movements	25%
Sleep-related groaning	20%
Confusional arousals	20%
Hypnogogic and Hypnopompic hallucinations	19%
Sleep terrors	18%
Nocturnal eating	18%
Exploding head syndrome	15%
REM sleep behaviour disorder	15%
Rhythmic movement disorder	14%
Sleep paralysis	14%
Violent behaviour	7%
Sleep-related abnormal swallowing	5%
Sleep enuresis	5%
Sleepwalking	5%
Sleep-related eating disorder	0%



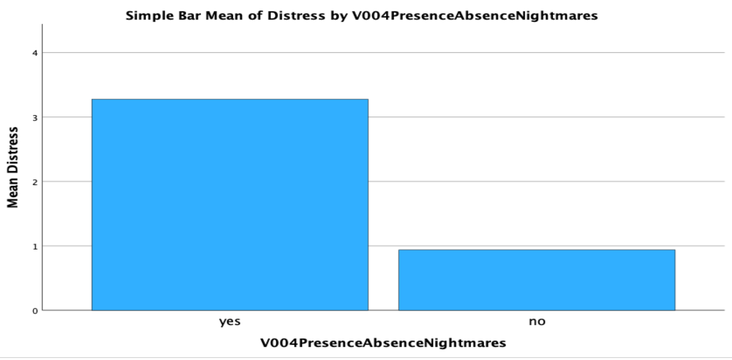
Moderate significant negative correlation (r = -.451) between Neuroticism score and parasomnia frequency



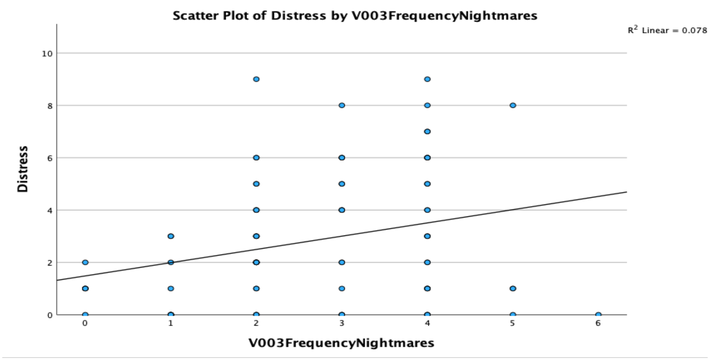
Moderate significant positive correlation (r = .441) between Distress score and parasomnia frequency



Weak significant negative correlation (r = -.224) between Neuroticism score and nightmare frequency



Those (n = 69) who reported nightmares had significantly higher levels of psychological distress than those (n = 16) who reported no nightmare



Weak significant positive correlation (r = .279) between Distress score and nightmare frequency