

Gender differences in the sleep of 40-45 year olds in a Norwegian county

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It is well known that women complain more of insomnia than men. However, it is not so clear to what extent sleep characteristics differ between the sexes.

The data of this study were collected as part of HUSK (the Hordaland Health Study '97-'99) in collaboration with the Norwegian National Health Screening Service, the University of Bergen and local health services, as part of a nationwide health screening. The study population included all individuals in Hordaland county born 1953-57 (29.400). Self-administered questionnaires provided information on various health behaviors including sleep problems, also, baseline measurements including height, weight, blood pressure etc were performed. A subgroup of 8860 persons (3531 men and 5329 women) answered a questionnaire with more detailed information on sleep habits and problems. Response rate varied between questions. Data were analysed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Significant but mostly small differences were found between genders in several measures. Women spent more time in bed (reported rise time minus reported bedtime) than men both during workdays and holidays and reported slightly longer sleep latencies. Women reported a higher need for sleep than men (mean for women 7h 45 min, 95 % confidence interval 7.44-7.46), men 7 h 16 min, 95% CI 7.15-7.18), and tended more towards eveningness than men. Also in this material, women complained more than men on some, but not all measures related to sleep problems.