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Disturbances of sleep and their relationship with psychosis and psychotic-like experiences

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There are strong links between sleep and psychosis. Sleep disturbances are commonly observed in schizophrenia patients but studies investigating psychotic symptoms in subjects with sleep disorders are missing.

We studied 24 subjects with insomnia disorder (41 ± 13 years), 47 participants with obstructive sleep apnea (47 ± 11 years) and 33 healthy controls (41 ± 13 years). Sleep in patients with sleep disorders was recorded and scored according to American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) standard criteria.

The main results were significant higher scores of magical and delusional ideations in patients with insomnia compared to healthy controls. Magical ideations in insomnia subjects were significantly negative correlated with the number of sleep spindles.

As there are indications that diminutions of sleep spindles are a biomarker for dysfunctional thalmo-cortical circuits underlying the neuropathology of psychosis, we conclude that there might be a sub-group of insomnia patients with less sleep spindles which is more vulnerable for developing a psychotic disorder in the future.

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