



A good night's sleep associated with reduced blood pressure

Sue Hughes

Chicago, IL - More evidence that a good night's sleep is associated with better control of blood pressure has come from a new study.

Dr Kristen Knutson (University of Chicago, IL) explained to **heartwire** that previous studies have suggested a link between poor sleep and increased blood pressure but that these have had limitations. "We measured actual sleep duration and quality using a specifically designed wrist band," she said.

The wrist band contains sensors that count wrist movements in 30-second time periods, determining whether the subject is asleep or awake.

"We found that short sleepers had a larger increase in blood pressure over five years than those who slept longer," Knutson said. "Evidence suggests that a certain amount of sleep is necessary for many different functions in the body, including immune function and glucose metabolism, and if we can extend sleep in those who don't sleep well or for long enough, this should translate into many health benefits—one of which may well be lower blood pressure," she added.

"Five or six hours a night is not enough. Seven hours should really be the minimum. In the US, we have a work culture that discourages decent sleeping patterns. There seems to be a sort of badge of honor associated with sleeping only a few hours each night, and someone who sleeps for seven to eight hours may be perceived as not being hard-working enough. We need to change that culture."

She also believes that those individuals who appear to need only three or four hours of sleep each night may be fooling themselves. "People who sleep for short times do not do well in performance tests, even if they think they are well rested. Even these people should try to increase their sleep times," she said.

Each hour of reduction in sleep duration was associated with a 37% increase in the odds of incident hypertension.