

How frequent are nightmares under psychological distress ?

Written by Australian Business

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A study published in the current issue of psychotherapy and psychosomatics provides data concerned with the prevalence of nightmares disorder in psychiatric patients.

Studies concerning prevalence of nightmares in psychiatric populations that did specify psychopathology have reported on subsamples such as: PTSD 50-70% , depression 17.5%, insomnia 18.3%, schizophrenia 16.7% , and borderline personality disorder 49%.

These studies suggest a high prevalence of nightmares in a psychiatric population, regardless of the primary diagnosis. However, no study reported prevalence rates of nightmares across all psychiatric disorders.

In this study, Authors assessed all consecutive patients admitted to a specialist mental health care with nightmare subscale of the SLEEP-50 , a questionnaire designed to detect sleep disorders as listed in the DSM-IV-TR.

The final sample of 498 patients had a mean age of 36.0 ± 11.8 and consisted of 359 (72.1%) women. Of the participants, 226 (45.4%) were married or cohabiting, 272 (54.6%) were single or alone. In this psychiatric sample, 149 patients (29.9%) suffered from nightmare disorder.

Women (n = 120; 33.4%) suffered more often from nightmare disorder than men (n = 29; 20.9%;). In a logistic regression analysis, gender was also the only variable significantly associated with nightmare disorder, if medication, age, and gender were entered simultaneously.

The observed 29.9% of the patients in this psychiatric sample that suffered from nightmare disorder is much higher than the prevalence of 2-5% found in the general population.

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The data also support the findings from previous studies that nightmares are highly prevalent in psychiatric populations. In PTSD patients, nightmare occurrence was 2.4 times higher than in the remaining sample (66.7 against 27.7%), but nightmares were highly prevalent across all disorders.

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