
MEDIA RELEASE

HELPING AUSTRALIA WAKE UP TO THE CAUSES OF ITS \$36BILLION BAD SLEEP BILL

Millions of Aussies are sleep walking into an increasingly unproductive – and even dangerous – future because of an epidemic of poor sleep habits and undiagnosed cases of obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA), insomnia or shiftwork disorder.

That's according to Flinders University's Professor Doug McEvoy and researchers from the Cooperative Research Centre for Alertness, Safety and Productivity (Alertness CRC), who say many of the 20% of Australians sleeping less than six hours a night, and those with sleep breathing disorders, are a ticking time bomb costing the economy tens of billions of dollars a year (Hillman DR, *MJA* 2013).

Professor McEvoy, a Flinders Centre of Research Excellence and leader of the Personalised Sleep Health Care theme within the Alertness CRC, says he and his team are looking to develop novel "phenotyping toolkits" to be used by clinicians to improve treatment for the two most prevalent sleep disorders: obstructive sleep apnoea and insomnia.

By developing innovative approaches and technologies to measure alertness and the risk of alertness failure, the Alertness CRC aims to reduce the risks and impacts on Australia's roads and in workplaces caused by an estimated 1.5 million Australians experiencing sleep disorders.

"Sleep is a fundamental necessity for the human body, essential for optimal functioning during the waking day. Unfortunately, it's neglected in today's 24-hour society because of shiftwork, family commitments and rising prevalence of sleep disorders," says Professor McEvoy.

"Through this CRC, we're looking to identify the causes of sleep disorders and the consequences of poor alertness on daytime performance and productivity to better tailor and personalise sleep healthcare delivery. This should help us get to grips with this dangerous and costly epidemic of sleep disorders."

A key part of the CRC's work is developing devices to assess biomarkers indicating those individuals who are most susceptible to alertness failure.

The Device Planning and Development Theme is being led by Professor Karen Reynolds, who is Director of the Medical Device Research Institute (MDRI) at Flinders University.

"Our role is to bring engineering input to help develop innovative technologies for detecting alertness and predicting alertness failure, and to translate these into clinically deployable devices," says Professor Reynolds.

If you suffer from sleeping difficulties and would like to volunteer as a participant in research to learn more about sleep disorders and potential treatments please register your interest online at <http://www.alertnesscrc.com/participate>

The research is being carried out at Flinders University and the Repatriation General Hospital in Adelaide, South Australia.

Further information

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