

New Experimental Treatment for Insomnia Investigated

The Woolcock Institute of Medical Research is commencing research studies into a new experimental treatment for insomnia.

The drug being tested works in a similar way to a naturally occurring hormone called melatonin which induces sleep.

Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder affecting about 30% of the population. People suffering from insomnia report at least one symptom - difficulty going to sleep, staying asleep or waking early.

Dr Anup Desai, Chief Investigator and Sleep Physician at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research said, Insomnia is not only distressing but it is also associated with diminished work output, absenteeism and greater rates of accidents.

The study will run for seven months and involve approximately 480 people from 45 research centres across Europe, Russia and Australia.

Two areas will be investigated: whether the drug used over a long period of time improves sleep; and whether the drug has an effect on balance and postural stability.

At present people with chronic insomnia can only receive medication for use over a short period of time, 7-10 days. Part of this study will investigate the effectiveness and safety of treating people with chronic insomnia over a seven month period.

We will also be investigating the effect of this drug on balance and postural stability. People with insomnia have an increased rate of accidents and it is thought that this may be caused at least partly by the medications currently used to treat insomnia.

Study volunteers will have physical examinations and laboratory tests, and an evaluation of their symptoms and general health, performed by the study doctor.

To be eligible for the study volunteers need to be over 18 years of age and have trouble getting to sleep and staying asleep through the night. Volunteers will need to come to the Sleep Laboratory for overnight stays, so shift workers are not eligible for this study. To register an interest in volunteering for this study people should call 1800 828 717.

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