Screening for sleep disorders in community pharmacies -- evaluation of a campaign in Switzerland.

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**Abstract:**

BACKGROUND: In 2003 the Swiss federation of pharmacists organized a campaign 'sleep disturbances--daytime sleepiness'. The goal was to assist pharmacy clients in detecting likely causes of any sleep disturbance or daytime sleepiness through a free of charge screening, and to deliver targeted counselling. For pharmacy practice there are no screening or triage guidelines to assess the severity of sleep and wakefulness disturbances and potential causes for those disturbances. In this paper the outcome of the campaign in terms of feasibility, participation, observed response patterns, sale of over-the-counter (OTC) sleeping pills, and counselling activities is evaluated. METHODS: The Stanford sleep disorders questionnaire and the Epworth sleepiness scale served to identify patterns of symptoms suggestive of four major categories of sleep disorders. The questionnaires were posted on a web-site and the clients' data were entered online in the pharmacies. A report was automatically generated and immediately available online to the pharmacists. The pharmacists documented separately their counselling activities in a pharmacist's activity report. RESULTS: Six hundred and twenty-two (23%) of 2743 pharmacy clients had response patterns suggestive of obstructive sleep apnoea, 418 (15%) of restless-legs-syndrome, 39 (1%) of a sleep disorder potentially associated with a psychiatric condition and 79 (3%) of narcolepsy. An Epworth sleepiness score >10 points was found in 567 (21%). After screening, 2345 (86%) pharmacy clients received targeted counselling. Only 216 (8%) purchased an OTC sleeping pill and 704 (26%) were recommended to consult a physician, but of these, 446 (63%) were already under medical supervision. CONCLUSIONS: The online screening tool for sleep disorders and daytime sleepiness was successfully introduced in Swiss pharmacies. Pharmacies were able to assess the pattern of individual sleep disorders and to identify a possible cause in nearly one-third of the cases.

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