

Insomnia treatment offers relief

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Insomnia causing sleepless nights, daytime fatigue and poor health outcomes is a cycle worth busting, experts say, with depression, anxiety and stress a common co-occurrence.

A study of more than 450 [insomnia](#) patients in Australia has confirmed some positive results for such patients with insomnia.

The Flinders University researchers found not only that a program of targeted cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia helps relieve insomnia—but also has a [positive effect](#) on symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress.

"With COVID-19 and many other stressors in life, treating the worst effects of insomnia may have a transformative effect on a person's wellbeing, [mental health](#) and lifestyle," says lead researcher Dr. Alexander Sweetman, from Flinders University's sleep research clinic, the Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health.

"We studied the impact of depression, anxiety, and stress on response to CBTi, in 455 'real world' insomnia patients, from pre-treatment to three-month follow-up," Dr. Sweetman says.

"Insomnia symptoms improved by a similar amount between patients with and without symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress."

Symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress show moderate-to-large improvement following CBTi, the results published in *Sleep Medicine* show.

Flinders Professor Leon Lack, who runs the insomnia therapy service at the Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health at Bedford Park, says CBT for insomnia ('CBTi') is recommended as the most effective and first-line treatment of insomnia.

As well as face-to-face CBTi therapy available at the Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health, the expert treatment is also available via telehealth options around Australia.

"The revamped insomnia treatment program at Flinders includes a range of treatments provided by experienced psychologists and physicians specializing in the management of sleep disorders, and treatment approaches which are directly based on the highest quality available scientific evidence," says Professor Lack.

"In line with many health services during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Flinders University insomnia treatment program is also available through online and telehealth platforms to people living in rural or remote areas of Australia."

The sleep research team is also rolling out the evidence-backed insomnia CBT program for general practitioners to support people with their sleep problems and avoid the use of sedative hypnotic medication over time.

More information: Alexander Sweetman et al, Do symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress impair the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia? A chart-review of 455 patients with chronic insomnia, *Sleep Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.sleep.2020.08.023](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2020.08.023)

Provided by Flinders University

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