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Children with Migraine at Increased Risk of Sleep Disturbances

CHICAGO – Children with migraine are more likely to have sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea and lack of sleep, than children without migraine, according to research on the effects of headaches on children’s sleep patterns that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting in Chicago, April 12–19, 2008.

For the study, 90 children with headache and sleep problems underwent a polysomnogram, which is a sleep test that monitors the brain, eye movements, muscle activity, heart rhythm, and breathing. This is the first study to use this type of sleep test on children. Of the participants, 60 had migraine, 11 had chronic daily headache, six had tension headache and 13 had non-specific headache.

The study found the children with migraine were twice as likely as the other children in the study to have sleep apnea, otherwise known as sleep disordered breathing, which involves repeated arousals from sleep because the upper airway for breathing has been obstructed. Sleep disordered breathing was found in 56 percent of children with migraine versus 30 percent of children with non-migraine headache.

Severe migraine was also associated with shorter total sleep time, longer total time to fall asleep, and shorter REM sleep, which is the stage of sleep in which most dreams can be recalled.

“Sleeping problems can exacerbate the problems migraine causes on a child’s health and may hinder a child’s performance at school,” said study author Martina Vendrame, MD, PhD, with Temple University in Philadelphia, PA, and member of the American Academy of Neurology. “Parents and doctors need to be aware of the strong likelihood of sleep disorders in children with migraine and seek appropriate preventions and treatments.”

The study also found 50 percent of children with tension headache grind their teeth at night compared to 2.4 percent of children with non-tension headache.

In addition, sleep disordered breathing was also frequent in children with non-specific headache and in children who were overweight.

The study was conducted at St. Christopher Hospital for Children, Drexel University, in Philadelphia, PA. The senior author, Sanjeev Kothare, MD, is currently at Harvard Medical School, Children’s Hospital in Boston.

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AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NEUROLOGY

60TH ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 12–19, 2008

The American Academy of Neurology, an association of more than 21,000 neurologists and neuroscience professionals, is dedicated to improving patient care through education and research. A neurologist is a doctor with specialized training in diagnosing, treating and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system such as Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and stroke. For more information about the American Academy of Neurology, visit www.aan.com.

Editor's Note: Dr. Vendrame will present this research during a scientific platform session at 1:30 p.m. CT/2:30 p.m. ET, on Thursday, April 17, 2008, in Room 186 of McCormick Place West Convention Center.

She will be available for media questions during a press briefing at 11:00 a.m. CT/12:00 p.m. ET, on Wednesday, April 16, 2008, in the on-site Press Interview Room, room 182.

If you are a member of the media interested in listening to the press briefing via conference call, please call the AAN Press Room (April 12 – 18) at (312) 791-7053.

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