

New study from WSU School of Medicine linking PTSD and sleep disturbance

An estimated 7.7 million American adults suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to neuroscientist Willie Vanderheyden, from Washington State University's School of Medicine, 90 percent of people who have experienced trauma suffer from some type of sleep disturbance, whether it is fragmented sleep, difficulty falling or staying asleep, or nightmares. ¹

A new study conducted by researchers at Washington State University shows that individuals with chronic sleep-onset insomnia who pulled an all-nighter performed up to twice as bad on a reaction time task as healthy normal sleepers. Lead author and researcher from WSU's Sleep and Performance Research Center stated, "There has been a theory about what perpetuates insomnia that focuses on hyperarousal, an



activation in their system that keeps those with insomnia from being able to wind down when they go to bed. We thought that this hyperarousal would protect them to some extent and had hypothesized that their performance after a night of total sleep deprivation would be better than normal healthy sleepers. Instead, we found the exact opposite." ²

¹ Judith Van Dongen, "WSU Scientist Studies Link between Poor Sleep and PTSD: WSU Health Sciences Spokane Extra: Washington State University," *WSU Health Sciences Spokane Extra*, last modified May 2, 2019, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://spokane.wsu.edu/extra/2019/05/08/wsu-scientist-investigates-link-poor-sleep-ptsd/>.

² Judith Van Dongen, "WSU Scientist Studies Link between Poor Sleep and PTSD: WSU Health Sciences Spokane Extra: Washington State University," *WSU Health Sciences Spokane Extra*, last modified May 2, 2019, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://spokane.wsu.edu/extra/2019/05/08/wsu-scientist-investigates-link-poor-sleep-ptsd/>.