

# UVA innovation

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**A Collaboration Worth Hearing About**

**UVA Researchers Restore Genes in Human Inner-Ear Cells**

**Reversing Botswana's Medical Brain Drain**

**Class Teaches 'Real World' of Healthcare**

*UVA biomedical engineers, otolaryngologists and pediatricians have formed an interdisciplinary team to adapt their anatomically correct human ear model for the teaching of medical students.*





## Finding a Better Night's Sleep Through the Internet

A new Internet-based intervention developed by a University of Virginia School of Medicine researcher may one day help the 30 percent of Americans with insomnia get a better night's sleep.

Sleep Healthy Using the Internet (SHUTi) is an online program designed to help people who have problems falling asleep, staying asleep or waking too early. A new UVA study funded by the National Institutes of Health will measure the effectiveness of SHUTi, and study coordinators are now looking for volunteers to participate. If proven effective, adults could eventually have a new alternative to help them sleep better.

"We believe that SHUTi will improve the quality and efficiency of sleep and improve mood and cognitive function," says Lee Ritterband, Ph.D., the creator of SHUTi and the Behavioral Medicine Training Director in UVA's Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences Center.

The cognitive-behavioral training offered through SHUTi is based on treatment for insomnia that has been developed during the past 20 years and shown to be effective in numerous studies. Typically, this type of training is only available from psychologists and physicians who have been specially trained in behavioral sleep medicine. SHUTi was created to make this training more accessible to more people through the Internet.

According to Ritterband, SHUTi should help users feel more in control of their sleep and better equipped to cope with sleep problems. SHUTi's instructional units focus on specific methods for improving the quantity and quality of sleep. Units include:

- An overview presenting information on sleep problems (including different types, prevalence and risk factors) as well as goal setting.
- Behavior recommendations, such as setting sleep times and learning techniques to improve sleep routines and habits.
- Tips on how problematic health practices (such as consuming caffeine too close to bedtime) and environmental factors (including noise and light) can contribute to sleep problems.
- Strategies to help users change their thoughts and beliefs about sleep that may be contributing to their sleep problems.
- Guidelines on how to maintain healthy sleep habits and prevent sleep problems from returning.

Ritterband believes the program has the potential to create long-lasting change for its users.

"Unlike drugs, a user doesn't have to be weaned from SHUTi," Ritterband says. "Medications can be helpful for short-term insomnia, but experts agree that cognitive behavioral therapy is better at helping people overcome chronic insomnia."