

Need More Shut Eye? New Online Study to Help People with Insomnia

March 8, 2007 -- If you are among the 30 percent of Americans who report having insomnia, a new Internet intervention may one day help you get better quality sleep. Developed at the University of Virginia Health System, *Sleep Healthy Using the Internet* or "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 one day have a new alternative to help them get better sleep.

"We believe that SHUTi will improve the quality and efficiency of sleep and improve mood and cognitive function," said Lee Ritterband, PhD, behavioral medicine training director in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences Center at the University of Virginia Health System and creator of "SHUTi."

The cognitive-behavioral training offered by SHUTi is based on treatment for insomnia that has been developed over the past 20 years and shown to be effective in numerous scientific 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 much more accessible to more people through the Internet.

According to Dr. Ritterband, SHUTi should help users feel more in control of their sleep and better equipped to cope with sleep problems, even after completing the program. The core units of SHUTi focus on specific methods for improving the quantity and quality of sleep. The units include:

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

Dr. Ritterband is excited about the program and its potential for long-lasting change.

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

Adults who meet standard criteria for insomnia are eligible to join the study. Space is limited. For more information, please call (434) 243-2704 or visit <http://www.shuti.net/>.

Additional Resources

- [U.Va. Health System](#)
- [SHUTi program](#)

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