

RELATIONS BETWEEN MENSTRUATION, SLEEP AND MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIORS IN INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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Objectives:

Maladaptive behaviors are a prevalent problem in individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) (Sandman, 2001). Previous studies show that inefficient sleep and increased maladaptive behaviors in developmentally delayed individuals are closely related (Symons, et al., 2000; Didden, et al., 2002; Lenjavi, et al., *in preparation*). Although maladaptive behaviors and negative emotional states are linked to occurrences of menses in different populations (Carr, et al., 2003), the association has not been thoroughly investigated in institutional individuals with DD (Taylor, et al., 1993). The current study explores relations between maladaptive behaviors, menses and sleep in developmentally delayed individuals.

Study Design:

Participants were twenty-three females with DD residing in a state institution. Participants ranged from 19 to 58 years of age (M=40, SD=9) with profound to mild mental retardation. Data collected were daily counts of maladaptive-behaviors, nightly logs of sleep, and daily occurrences of menses.

A three step analysis was performed: 1) to examine sleep efficiency and maladaptive behavior before, during and after menstruation; 2) to detect differences between regular and irregular cyclers; and 3) to compare the frequency of menstruation to mean maladaptive behavior counts.

Results:

Preliminary findings suggest that there may be no differences in behavior or sleep before, during or after menstruation for a majority of the participants. Furthermore, regularity of cycles of menstruation had no effect on maladaptive behaviors or sleep efficiency. However, frequency of menstruation is related to increased counts of maladaptive behaviors ($R = .46, p = .026$).

Conclusions:

The finding suggests that maladaptive behaviors may be internally mediated by a cumulative exposure to estrogen.