



10 December 2024

Dear Headteacher,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Coventry University and South African sleep researchers have been awarded a Wellcome Trust Mental Health Award to investigate the relationship between sleep, the body clock and symptoms of depression and anxiety in adolescents.

The team, led by Associate Professor Gosia Lipinska from the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town secured this five-year grant worth £2.3M to conduct a study entitled “**SleepCHAMPS – Sleep & Circadian Health in Adolescent Mental-health: a Prospective Study**”. The co-investigators on the UK team are Associate Professor Dr Laura Roden (Research Centre for Health and Life Sciences) and Assistant Professor Dr Ksenija da Silva (Research Centre for Healthcare and Communities), both from Coventry University.

What is the aim of the project?

The study aims to identify sleep- and circadian-related mechanisms through which adolescents may either develop or demonstrate resilience to depression and anxiety. The team hopes the study will also shed light on how the trajectory from sleep changes to depression and anxiety during adolescence differ in low, medium, and high socioeconomic communities based in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Thus, data collection for this ambitious study will take place in Cape Town and Makhanda in South Africa, and Coventry in the United Kingdom.

Who are the participants?

We are contacting secondary schools in and around Coventry to participate in the study. This will involve an initial screening of current Year 9 students in February 2025 who are interested in taking part in a remunerated/compensated, 3-year study. Eligible students will wear a sleep watch (similar to a Fitbit) for 2 weeks, fill in sleep and health questionnaires (approximately 30 minutes), be tested for a circadian clock gene variant (2 minutes), and visit the university one evening to provide saliva samples to measure melatonin (3 minutes every hour). A sub-group of students will be asked to undertake a polysomnographic (PSG) analysis of their sleep at home for an additional £50 voucher. As this is a longitudinal study, the same students will be asked to repeat the testing after one and two years (in Years 10 and 11).

How would we like to invite the students to participate?

The Headteacher, Deputy Headteachers, Year 9 tutors, pastoral care, or class teachers send the attached message to Year 9 parents. Parents and their children will contact the researchers to indicate their interest and complete their consent. Students will complete the study measures in person, scheduled around participants' availability and outside school times. Parents with no interest can ignore the message.

What are the benefits to the community?

The study has a strong community engagement philosophy and aims to involve not only students but also other stakeholders, including teachers, parents, counsellors, and school alumni, to give a voice to the research participant body and to ensure learning in the study is a two-way process between the communities we engage in and the researchers. Some of these community members will form our "Lived Experience Advisory Board" and they inform our understanding of the roles of sleep, circadian, environmental, psychological, and behavioural factors to strengthen the design of the study.

What are the potential risks associated with the study?

There are no specific risks at the community- or school-level of participation. Students enrolled in the study may experience some discomfort when asked to consider various aspects of their mental health. To mitigate this risk, we have a procedure in place for identifying enrolled students with pronounced mental health difficulties and offering them support. The project has been approved by ethical committees in both countries.

There are many benefits to the study: apart from a £50 voucher and small souvenirs, the students receive their sleep patterns data and have already reported paying more attention to improving their sleep. We would be happy to share the findings at the end of the project.

What happens next?

If you are interested in your school participating in this project, please don't hesitate to contact us at sleepandwellbeing@coventry.ac.uk. If you would like to discuss the details of the study further, we would be delighted to arrange a meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,



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