



# Vision Problems and Insomnia Symptoms among Older Russians

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## Introduction

Insomnia and vision problems are highly prevalent in older populations.<sup>1,2</sup> Research shows that depression, insomnia, and social isolation are all common among older adults.<sup>3</sup>

There is limited data indicating vision problems has direct associations with insomnia, independently of the presence of depression.

This study ascertained associations between vision problems and insomnia symptoms in a community-based sample of older Russians.

## Methods

Community-residing older Russians (n = 307, ages: 50-95 years, mean = 72.64 ± 9.62; women = 54% and men = 46%) participated in the study.

Surveys were conducted in a semi-structured environment as part of a study assessing health-care needs and physical health characteristics in that population.

Bilingual community outreach educators administered surveys in various community centers, enlisting representative Russian aggregates in Brooklyn, NY.

Measures for the present analysis included demographic and health-related data. Respondents received \$20 for their participation. Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS 15.0.

## Results

Eighty-nine percent of the volunteers had at least a High School degree; 27% were married and 73% were single, divorced, or separated.

Forty-one percent lived alone, whereas 59% lived either with a spouse, their children, a family member, or a friend.

Overall, 93% reported at least one of several major health problems: vision (48%), hearing (26%), breathing (13%), hypertension (53%), snoring (28%), diabetes (26%), arthritis (53%), cancer (11%), weight problems (34%), and depression (43%).

Rates (%) of Insomnia Complaints Comparing Older Russians with and without Depression			
Variable	NO Depression	Yes Depression	$\chi^2$
Difficulty Initiating Sleep	39	61	33**
Difficulty Maintaining Sleep	34	66	45**
Early Morning Awakening	36	64	18**

Differences in insomnia-related complaints were assessed using Fisher's Exact tests; \*\*p < 0.01.

Sixty-two percent reported insomnia symptoms, defined as difficulty initiating sleep, difficulty maintaining sleep, or early morning awakenings. Insomnia symptoms were more common among Russians reporting depression (see Table).

Logistic regression analysis showed that individuals with vision problems were nearly three times as likely than those without to report insomnia symptoms [OR = 2.73, p < 0.01; 95% CI = 1.68-4.48]. Adjusting for the presence of depression reduced the odds [OR = 2.00, p < 0.01; 95% CI = 1.15-3.49].

## Conclusions

Older Russians in Central Brooklyn have a higher prevalence of vision problems and insomnia than observed in the general US population. As expected, those with depression were more likely to experience insomnia.

Older Russians have twice the odds of reporting insomnia independently of depression, a common problem affecting quality of life in that population.

## References

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3. Livingston G, et al. Br J Gen Pract. 1993; 43:445-448.