



January 12th, 2015

SAD, Sleep and Music to the Ears

Sunshine is Important

With all the awareness of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in recent years and the link between daylight and mood, it should come as no surprise that Austrian researchers have found a direct correlation between hours of sunshine and the rate of suicides. Moreover, increased exposure to sunshine was actually protective against suicide risk. While not universally true, it is probably a good rule of thumb to take advantage of any sunshine opportunities available at this time of year.

Sleep is Important Too!

Many have heard of or experienced the “hangover” effect that can come with some sleep medications, but 1 in 7 adults actually suffers from confusional arousal (CA or “sleep drunkenness”) when awakened. Typically, these people have been in a deep slow-wave sleep and they experience disorientation, impaired judgement, and even violent outbursts or amnesia. CA has been linked to some mental disorders and is worth following-up on.

The importance of sleep is vastly underrated. Insufficient sleep has been linked to cardiovascular disease, weight gain and cognitive issues – and now it’s being shown that a good night’s sleep helps to consolidate a newly learned motor skills. The Canadian study looked at people learning to play a new musical instrument and found that no sleep reduced skill retention by 21% while sleep improved it by 7%!

Music – Never Too Late to Learn

Many have heard of the benefits of music for the brain. Researchers at Boston’s Children’s Hospital have tried to quantify this, noting that musicians, both children and adults, enjoy enhanced executive function (EF) – cognitive flexibility, working memory, processing speed. While they weren’t able to say whether music caused the enhancement or if people with good EF tended to take up music, they said it was never too late to take up an instrument and benefit!

It is music to your pharmacist’s ears to hear your health questions! Drop by any time to be enlightened!