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How sleep deprived are your kids and is overtiredness leading them to take dangerous risks?

- by: Sarah Sharples
- From: Inner West Courier Inner City
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Many teenagers are sleep deprived but only two per cent receive medical treatment.

Source: Supplied

- Seven out of ten teens affected by sleep issues
- Many incorrectly given psychological diagnosis
- Extreme sleep deprivation can lead to severe behavioural issues
- Electronic devices primary cause for lack of shut eye

DR CHRIS Seton knows the extreme impact sleep deprivation can have on teenagers, with one patient coming to see him after he had petrol bombed his teacher's car.

"Some of the boys do risk taking behaviour because they're so sleep deprived ... (my patient) did that because the teacher kept hassling him about being tired and moody," Dr Seton said.

"We fixed the problem and he had been expelled from that school and he then went to another school and was a model student."



Dr Peter Buchanan and Shadow Health Minister Tanya Plibersek monitoring the sleep clinic at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research in Glebe.

Source: News Limited

Dr Seton is a part of Australia's first interdisciplinary paediatric sleep clinic, which opened last week in Glebe.

It will help children and teens to overcome their sleep problems.

The clinic, to be run fortnightly, will have specialists in sleep, respiratory, allergies, and ear, nose and throat conditions and was opened at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research.

Sleep deprivation is incredibly common, impacting seven out of 10 teenagers, yet only two per cent of them realise the problem as a medical issue and seek help from a doctor, Dr Seton said.



Seven-year-old Scarlett Clements with Sara Cooper, Clinical Manager of Paediatrics in the clinic.
 Source: News Limited

Many teenagers are labelled with a psychological diagnosis, such as anxiety or depression, and some don't actually have these conditions but instead are suffering from sleep deprivation, he said.

Electronic devices were primarily to blame for teenagers missing out on shut eye, Dr Seton said.

"When all these electronic devices became portable and hand held, teenagers started to use them more in the bedroom and later at night and the smaller the device gets the brighter the screen gets and the blue screen lowers your melatonin ... and makes you more wakeful," he said.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can young people's screen-time be managed at home? Tell us your thoughts below

Added to that is FOMO – fear of missing out – which drives overtired teenagers to stay up late texting and chatting and playing games, Dr Seton said.

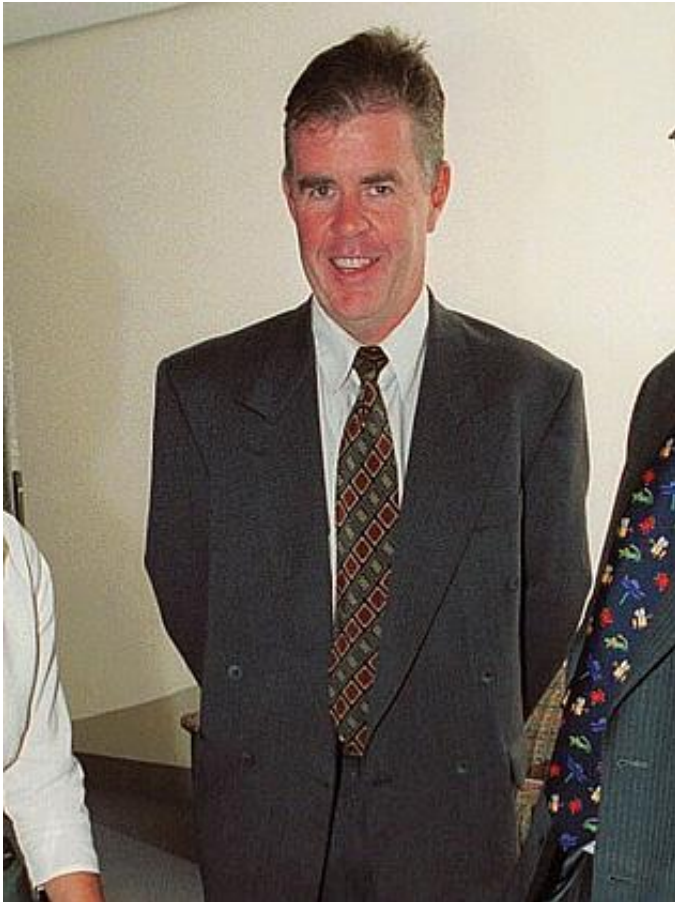
While treatment can be offered through the sleep clinic, Dr Seton has also established SleepShack, an online sleep diagnostic and treatment program for adolescents.

"It's the same assessment and treatment we do face-to-face but it's online," he said.

"We know a lot of the teenagers are what we call therapeutic prisoners, forced to come along to a sleep

clinic by their parents and would much prefer to do this electronically.

“So it maps sleep electronically, assesses sleep patterns. We give treatment online.”



Dr Chris Seton is part of a multidisciplinary team that will run the sleep clinic in Glebe. Picture: Troy Snook

Source: News Limited



Teenagers are worried about FOMO - fear of missing out - and are using their phones before going to sleep.

Source: News Limited

He said the online tool was attracting children aged 10 to 13, while the sleep clinics tended to get teenagers in years 11 and 12, who are doing their HSC.

The clinic will be able to diagnose and treat a range of sleep issues, including night terrors and toddler sleep problems, insomnia, obstructive sleep apnoea and restless legs syndrome.

For more information go to [woolcock.org.au](http://www.woolcock.org.au) (<http://www.woolcock.org.au>)



Fomo

Source: Supplied

CASESTUDIES

- One teenager got caught drug dealing in the school, was expelled and couldn't get into a new school. When he learned to sleep properly, he never got involved in drug dealing and drug taking again
- One patient petrol bombed his teacher's car. After treatment he became a model student
- Other kinds of risk-taking behaviour among older teens include speeding in cars. A trigger for treatment is having a car accident at 2am in the morning and then looking for help

NORMAL SLEEPING

- Teens need nine hours sleep a night on average
- Going to bed at a set time on school nights can help
- When feeling sleepy at bed time, try not to ignore this by staying up, it's a window of opportunity for sleep

■ On weekends, try not to sleep into much, get outdoors

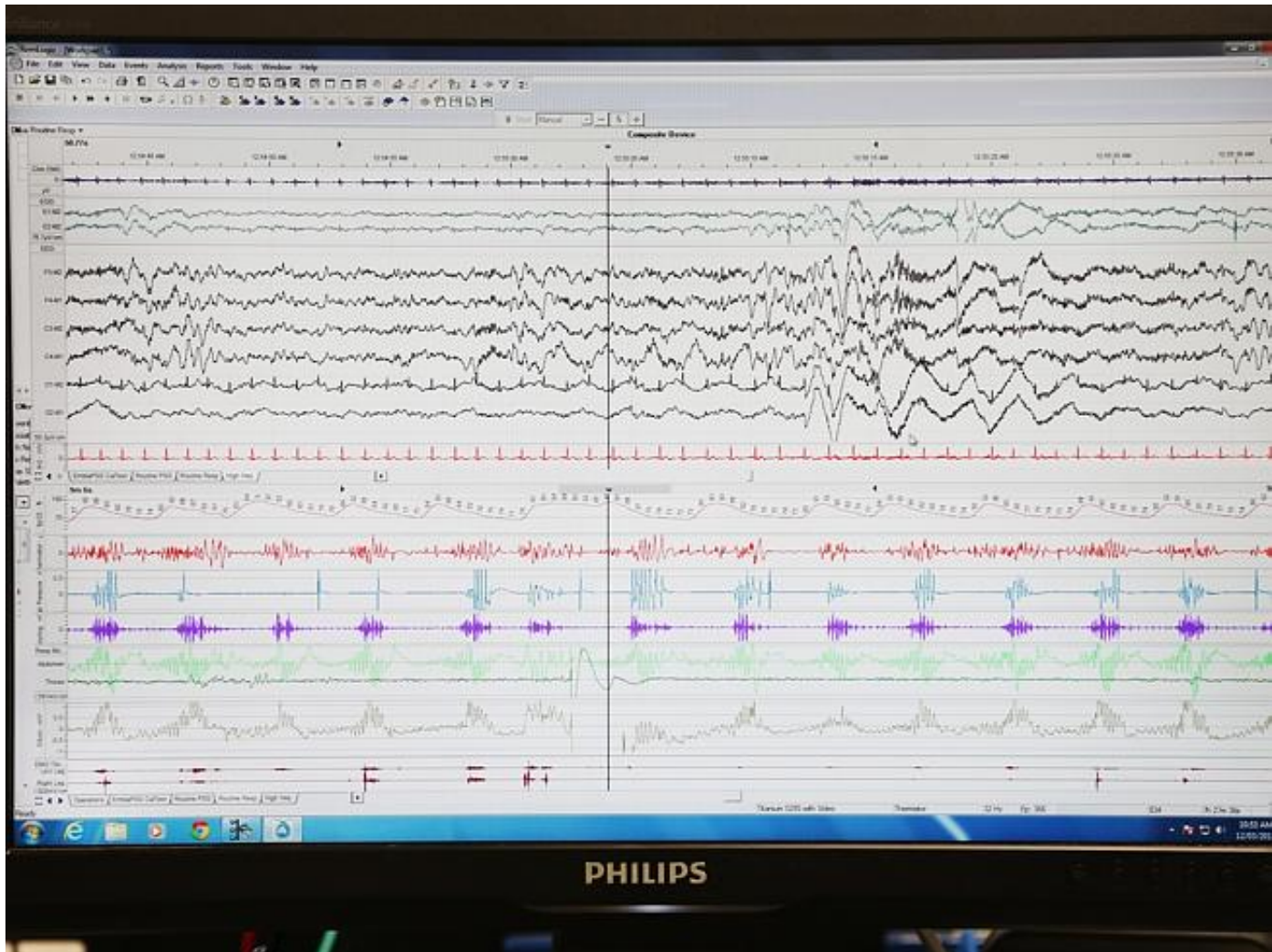


Sleeping man that appears to be in a deep exhausted sleep.

Source: News Limited

WARNING SIGNS

- Biggest red flags are adolescents' ability to sleep in excessively on weekend, for example to lunch time or for 14 hours and parents having to drag children out of bed on weekdays, while they complain they're still tired and lethargic
- Non-specific signs are poor learning and concentration and moodiness
- Sleep deprivation can cause side effects such as learning problems, risk-taking behaviours, family disharmony, school absenteeism, poor self-esteem, depression and obesity
- A common trigger for referral is students missing so many days of school that the school asks the parents for an explanation



A computer screen shows the readings of someone undergoing a sleep study.

Source: News Corp Australia

COMMON TERMS

FOMO: Fear of missing out – driving overtired teenagers to stay up late texting, chatting and playing games

INFOMANIA: The expectant waiting for a return text. The reason texts wake you up more than phone calls, because you wait for a return message

GENERATION C: C stands for connected. The age group which turns to the internet naturally and surfs media, socialises and shares experiences through devices. They are most likely to sleep with their smartphone

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