Reviewer's report

Title: The relationship of health care use with the persistence of insomnia: a prospective cohort study

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Reviewer: Gita Mishra

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The relationship of health care use with persistence of insomnia: a prospective cohort study

This is an interesting paper on an important topic. The authors found that insomnia is a chronic problem regardless of whether or not they have consulted their primary care clinician or received prescription for medication over the year. This finding is in agreement with results from recent reviews (see eg Hamblin JE. Prim Care. 2007 Sep;34(3):659-74, viii. Insomnia: an ignored health problem).

However, there are a number of issues of major concerns:

1) It is ashamed to discard such large amount of data by just focusing on those who reported insomnia at baseline. One would argue that we are not seeing the full picture. The authors need to justify why weren’t the four combinations of insomnia taken into account:

those with no insomnia at the 2 time points; insomnia at baseline but not at follow-up; insomnia at follow-up but not at baseline; and insomnia at both time points.

To increase the power of the study, the authors could define insomnia as those who gave a positive answer to any of the 4 questions. It is also worthwhile to investigate the severity of sleep problems i.e the people who experienced all the four aspects of sleeping difficulties.

2) The literature review could be improved substantially. The authors seemed to have missed some key reviews and papers such as the one mentioned above and the work Byles JE et al (Sleep. 2005 Aug 1;28(8):972-9) that described the longitudinal experience of insomnia among older women.

3) The definition of insomnia should be up front in the introduction section.

4) A flow diagram to explain the study design in the methods section would be more useful than a verbal description in the results section.

5) As 64% of those with sleep problems at baseline responded to follow-up. Could this be due to them having more health problems than the non-respondents? The authors should provide the percentage of women with sleep problems at baseline and who did not respond to follow-up.

6) The odds ratio was 1.98 which was quite high and so instead of placing too
much weight on ‘p-value’ I would suggest that the authors say that “although the result was not statistically significant”, it was “suggestive” of…

Minor comments:
1) Tables 1 & 2 - were the adjusted and unadjusted analyses based on the same n?
2) Table 1 – there was hardly anyone with took hypnotics and who did not have a sleep problem (n)
3) The analyses in tables 1 & 2 should be done in a stepwise manner –
   a. OR for age + age
   b. OR for age + sex + insomnia at baseline
   c. OR for age + sex + insomnia at baseline + pain+ depression.
4) The use of prospective cohort in the title is misleading as at this stage the study just has a one follow-up – 12 months apart.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests