Empowering Women's Sleep Health: A Lifespan Perspective

As attendees of the AASM Women's Health Sleep Initiative know well and educate and advocate for others to recognize, sleep is more than a biological necessity. Sleep is a cornerstone of physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being. Sleep health can be challenging for all people, and particularly so for women, due to the complex interplay of biological, hormonal, social, and environmental factors that evolve throughout life.

Understanding the Unique Sleep Challenges Women Face

Women are disproportionately affected by sleep disorders such as insomnia, restless legs syndrome (RLS), and circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorders. These conditions often emerge or intensify during key life stages such as puberty, pregnancy, and menopause due to hormonal fluctuations and physiological changes.[1]

Women's sleep health is also impacted by their often disproportionate role as caregivers, which can disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to long-term health risks.[1]

Consideration in Central Disorders of Hypersomnolence (CDH)

A study conducted at the Yale Center for Sleep Medicine that analyzed 109 newly diagnosed people with narcolepsy, 68 of whom were women, found that 85% of men were likely to be diagnosed after 16 years versus **28 years for women,** even though latency on the multiple sleep latency test (MSLT) was significantly shorter for women than men (5.4 minutes vs 7.4 minutes; P=0.03).[2] The researchers hypothesized that women may be less forthcoming with their symptoms and noted that the *subjective* Epworth Sleepiness Scale scores were comparable in both groups despite the objective findings on the MSLT that indicated greater severity of sleepiness in women.

Sleep medicine literature is replete with discussion about the lengthy delay in diagnosing narcolepsy and idiopathic hypersomnia, and the often misdiagnosis of depression or anxiety. When mood disorders are co-morbid to CDH, diagnostic opportunities may be "missed." Clinicians in sleep medicine often encounter patients, many of them women, who have seen multiple providers and felt dismissed or misunderstood regarding their symptoms. This experience has been described by researchers as "medical gaslighting," which disproportionality affects women and individuals from minoritized groups.[3]

Avadel's Commitment to Women's Sleep Health

Avadel is proud to support initiatives like the **AASM Women's Sleep Health Task Force**[4] and the upcoming **Women's Sleep Health Summit** in Chicago, which aim to close care gaps and elevate awareness around women's sleep needs.

In clinical research, women are often underrepresented; we are also proud that our clinical studies have had substantial female participation, with 68% in our pivotal narcolepsy trial,[5] 68% in an open-label long-term safety and tolerability study,[6-7] and 76% in an ongoing real-world evidence study.[8]

At Avadel, we recognize that advancing women's sleep health is not only a medical imperative but also a reflection of our patient focus: compassion, innovation, and advocacy.

On behalf of Avadel, we wish you a successful meeting!

Best,

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Senior Vice President Medical & Clinical Affairs

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