Depression, Suicidality, and Sleep Disturbances: A Literature Review

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Background
Nightmares are more frequent in depressed patients with melancholic features (from article by Agargun, 1998) and more common in depressed patients (from article by Besiroglu et al., 2007)

Method
This study hypothesized that nightmares and suicidal behavior is related to melancholic features in unipolar depression

Results
Subjects with melancholic features and had previously attempted suicide had higher rates of nightmares (p=0.03), middle insomnia (p=0.28), and terminal insomnia (p=0.09) than subjects with melancholic behaviors that had not attempted suicide

Discussion
Nightmares are more frequent in depressed patients with melancholic features than without melancholic features

Nightmares and negative dream affect may contribute to feeling worse during the day and could predict suicidal tendencies

Melancholia may be associated with increased suicide attempts

Review Conclusions
These studies found that sleep disturbances effect suicidal behaviors, specifically in women
Each study recommended clinicians monitor patients sleep patterns as a part of their treatment plan
Future research should use longitudinal studies with an EEG aspect, and should also look at the effects of serotonergic factors on sleep