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Preliminary evidence of behavioral and cognitive sequelae of obstructive sleep apnea in children.

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OBJECTIVES: To characterize the daytime sequelae of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) in children. BACKGROUND: OSA syndrome is a common disorder in children with estimates of prevalence ranging from 1.1 to 2.9%. Numerous studies have documented neuropsychological deficits in adults with OSA, although only a few preliminary studies have described these problems in children with OSA. METHODS: In the present study, otherwise healthy children with OSA (n=28), and a healthy age-matched comparison group (n=10) were assessed with standard measures of sleep, behavior, and cognitive function. RESULTS: Children with OSA had significantly more behavior problems than the healthy comparison group based on parents' reports ($F=7.29$, $P<0.005$). Children diagnosed with moderate to severe OSA had significantly lower scores on a timed cancellation task that assesses sustained attention ($F=10.0$, $P<0.01$). A significant association was found between OSA severity (rho=-86, $P<0.01$) and measures of verbal ability. CONCLUSIONS: These initial findings suggest that there are identifiable daytime sequelae of childhood OSA and that it is important to evaluate these daytime disturbances in making determinations about intervention.

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