

Managing the Complexity of Insomnia: A Qualitative Analysis of the Current Practices of Australian General Practitioners

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Introduction

Clinical guidelines for the treatment of insomnia recommend Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for insomnia (CBTi) as first line treatment but many patients still receive hypnotic or sedative medications.

At present there is little understanding about the role and capacity of general practitioners (GPs) to manage insomnia in Australia. This study aimed to explore the attitudes, experiences, barriers and facilitators to the management of insomnia by Australian GPs.

Methodology

Qualitative study using a pragmatic inductive approach. GPs were recruited through professional networks and Facebook groups. Purposive sampling was used to ensure recruitment of a sample varied in age, years of experience and location.

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with data collection continuing until data saturation was reached. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and concepts in the data.

Results

Interviews conducted with 28 GPs

3 themes identified

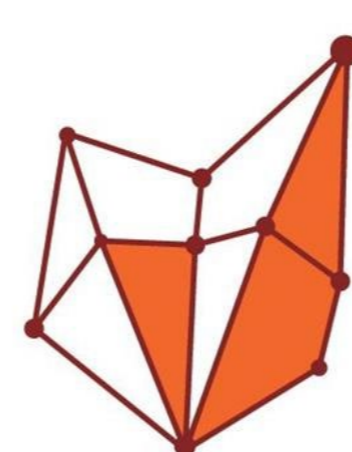
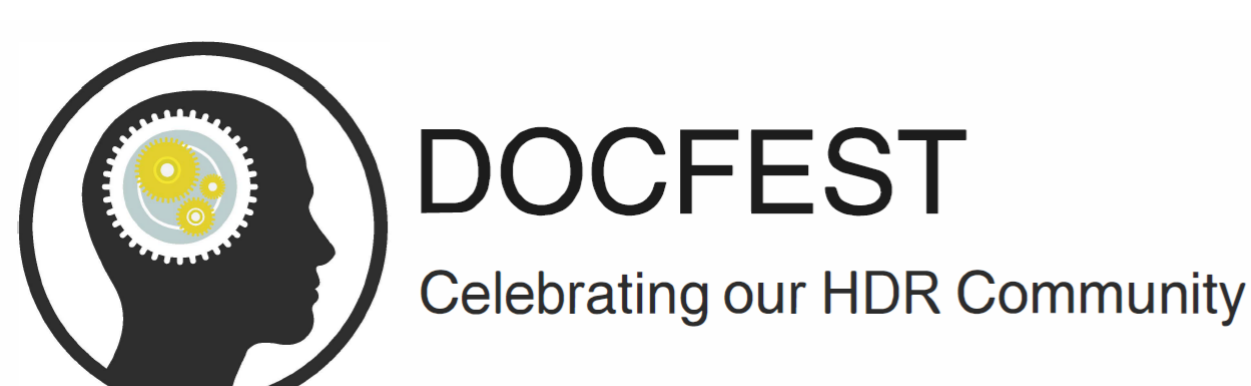
- 1) Responsibility for insomnia care sits with GPs
- 2) Complexities in managing insomnia
- 3) Difficulties navigating treatment provision pathways

Dealing with chronic insomnia can be very – yes, it can be a very difficult thing sometimes and complicated. (Participant 27, Metropolitan NSW)

I have a significant elderly population who have been on medication from their GPs for 25, 30 years, and they're very reluctant to change. (Participant 13, Metropolitan Queensland)

I've referred someone for mental health issues that were contributing to insomnia, but that's a referral not for the insomnia, that's for the mental health condition. (Participant 22, Rural NSW)

Insomnia is a complex condition, often associated with co-morbid mental health conditions. GPs need more options to support effective management within general practice, and greater clarity about referral pathways to specialist services for more complex cases of insomnia.



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