

High School Bell Times Work Group

February 11, 2013

Guest Speaker: Dr. Judith Owens, Director of Sleep Medicine, Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine, Children's National Hospital Center, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Owens presentation addressed a variety of topics related to adolescent development, sleep deprivation research on adolescents, sleep deprivation research on adults, and trends in high school bell times. She presented her own research, as well as summarizing key topics and findings from available sleep research, which included the following:

- Development of circadian sleep cycles across infants, toddlers, adolescents, and adults
- Sleep deprivation and its effects on physical and emotional health, and particularly risk taking, memory, learning, judgment, and obesity
- Impacts of caffeine and other stimulants on adolescents
- School start time trends, and research outcomes from schools that have altered high school start times
- Issues impacting changing high school start times

Discussion

Topics raised by group participants following Dr. Owens presentation included the following:

- Impact of changing high school times on elementary students and middle school students
- Factors that influence bedtimes for high school students (e.g., environmental factors, artificial light)
- Whether changing the start time would be sufficient to improve outcomes for high school students, and what other strategies are needed (e.g., limiting artificial light before bedtime, increasing natural light exposure during day)
- Impact of medications used to treat attention deficit disorders on sleep
- Napping and its effectiveness as a replacement for lost nighttime sleep
- Shifting weekend sleep and its effectiveness as a replacement for lost weekday sleep
- Whether letting students start school at 8:30 interferes with preparing students for the "real world" of adult work schedules
- Historical trends in adolescent sleep
- College schedules