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Behavior Problems Associated with Sleep Disordered Breathing in School-Aged Children—the Tucson Children’s Assessment of Sleep Apnea Study

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Objective The purpose of the current study was to examine prevalence of and relations between a commonly used measure of nighttime breathing problems, the Respiratory Disturbance Index (RDI), and a range of problem behaviors in community children. **Methods** Participants were 403 unreferral children aged 6–12 years. Recruitment was completed through public elementary schools. Overnight unattended in-home polysomnography was used to assess sleep and breathing. The RDI was used as the indicator of respiratory events during sleep. The Child Behavior Checklist and the Conners’ Parent Rating Scales-Revised were used to assess behavior. **Results** Prevalence rates for Attention, Cognitive Problems, Aggression, Oppositional behavior, and Social Problems were greatest for subjects with high RDIs. Prevalence for Internalizing behaviors was not greater for those subjects with high RDIs. Hyperactivity was not strongly related to higher RDIs. **Conclusions** Behavioral problems may exist in the presence of nocturnal breathing events in unreferral children. Specific patterns of behavioral morbidity have still not been established. Some behaviors, such as hyperactivity, may show differing sensitivity and specificity in relation to the RDI.

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Key words: behavior; children; Child Behavior Checklist; Conners' Parent Rating Scales—Revised; prevalence; Respiratory Disturbance Index; sleep disordered breathing.

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