



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Launch of 'Sleep Problems in Later Life' A new section on [www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org)

A new section of the award-winning website **Healthtalkonline** on older people's experiences of sleep problems in later life was launched today. It was created in collaboration with the SomnIA (Sleep in Ageing\* research project). The Launch was chaired by Professor Sara Arber (University of Surrey), and Speakers included Professor Anthea Tinker, a social gerontologist from King's College, London, Dr Neil Stanley, sleep expert and former Manager of the Clinical Research and Trials Unit, at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, and an older person's representative.

Increasing age is associated with reduced quality sleep, with older people being more likely to report poorer sleep. Poor sleep is known to negatively impact on quality of life, inhibits recovery following illness and is an independent risk factor for falls and depression. This new section on sleep problems in later life features video and audio interviews with 39 men and women aged between 65 and 95 years old talking about their experiences of poor sleep, and strategies they used to improve their sleep.

"Elderly people who are worried and concerned about their family, the future and financial security often experience difficulties sleeping, as do people who provide care for their partners, or suffer from ill health" said Sue Venn, the researcher who undertook the interviews. Older people are unsure whether to nap in the day, Sue said, "Although retirement brings opportunities for daytime sleep, napping often makes people feel guilty".

This new section of the Healthtalkonline website includes summaries of what interviewees said on a number of topics, such as strategies for getting a good night's sleep, going to the toilet in the night, going to the doctor about sleep, and attitudes towards taking sleep medications and over the counter remedies.

*"The thing that keeps me from sleeping is the worry of people. If one of the grandchildren are not well then I know and I lay up there for ages." Mary, 72*

*"I put sleep on a par with food, because without food, without a proper type of food, you soon get physically run down. The same thing happens if you don't have the right amount of sleep, you could get physically run down." Les, 80*

The website will also give health professionals and researchers insights into what it really means to older people who have trouble sleeping.

*"I suppose I am thinking if I don't get a good night's sleep soon I am just going to explode with everything around me. And so trivial things like the grass hasn't been cut, or I haven't done my ironing and I need to go here and see that person and do this. It all kind of piles in if you haven't had a good night ." Dessie, 73*

\*The Healthtalkonline section presents findings from part of a multi-disciplinary research project on sleep in later life in the community and care homes. The SomnIA research project is supported by the New Dynamics of Ageing initiative, a multidisciplinary research programme supported by AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC and MRC (RES-339-25-0009). For further information please visit the SomnIA website, [www.somnia.surrey.ac.uk](http://www.somnia.surrey.ac.uk) or contact: Sue Venn, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, Guildford GU2 7XH, telephone: 01483 689292, email: [s.venn@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:s.venn@surrey.ac.uk)

## **About DIPEX/Healthtalkonline**

DIPEX has created two websites – [www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org) and [www.youthhealthtalk.org](http://www.youthhealthtalk.org) – of people's experiences of almost 50 different illnesses and health conditions. The websites are aimed at patients, their carers, family and friends, doctors, nurses and other health professionals and are based on in-depth qualitative research carried out by the DIPEX Health Experiences Research Group at the University of Oxford, sometimes in collaboration with other universities.

Users of our websites will find accounts – presented through video, audio and written material – which resonate with their own perspectives and experiences of issues such as reaction to diagnosis, consultation with their doctor, effect on work, social life and relationships, decisions on treatment options and side-effects. The questions that patients want answered are identified in their interviews and summarised on our websites.

To date, we have covered illnesses including cancer, heart disease, neurological conditions (Parkinson's, epilepsy and autism) chronic health issues (HIV, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis) and mental health. We also provide experiences of women's health (pregnancy, breastfeeding, antenatal screening) and publish young people's experiences (including epilepsy, sexual health, teenage cancer) on our dedicated website – [youthhealthtalk.org](http://youthhealthtalk.org).

Our supporters include Jon Snow, Dawn French, Hugh Grant, John Humphrys, Ian McEwan, Dr Jonathan Miller, Jenni Murray, Michael Palin, Philip Pullman, Libby Purves, Claire Rayner, Thom Yorke and many others. DIPEX, a registered charity no. 1087019, is funded by the Department of Health and charitable trusts. Full details are on our websites.

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## The **DIPEX** Charity

DIPEX is a registered charity No: 1087019 and company limited by guarantee No. 4178865  
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