

Gene mutation could explain why children with autism have trouble falling asleep

Up to 80 percent of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience sleep problems. The source of these problems has been as much of a mystery as the exact causes of ASD, which scientists are still working to unravel. A new study led by a team of neuroscientists at Washington State University has brought scientists closer to identifying the causes of disturbed sleep in autism, which could open the door to future treatment that would bring relief to children with autism and their caregivers.

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Published in the open access journal [eLife](#), the team's findings suggest that sleep problems in patients with autism spectrum disorder may be linked to a mutation in the gene SHANK3 that in turn regulates the genes of the body's 24-hour day and night cycle. Their study showed that people who were missing the SHANK3 gene and mice that lacked part of the gene had difficulty falling asleep. Their study in mice also strongly supported one possible explanation as to why individuals with autism have trouble falling asleep: It's not that they are not sleepy. They are sleepy, but they simply cannot fall asleep.

Read full, original post: [WSU study links gene to sleep problems in autism](#)