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Short Communication

Functional and Regulatory Characteristics of Sleep Spindles

Syeda Urooj Riaz*

Department of Medicine, Jinnah Medical College Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan

DESCRIPTION

Sleep spindles are bursts of neural oscillatory activity that are generated by interplay of the Thalamic Reticular Nucleus (TRN) and other thalamic nuclei during stage 2 NREM sleep in a frequency range of 11 to 16 Hz (usually 12–14 Hz) with a duration of 0.5 seconds or greater (usually 0.5–1.5 seconds). After generation as an interaction of the TRN neurons and thalamocortical cells, spindles are sustained and relayed to the cortex by thalamo-thalamic and thalamo-cortical feedback loops regulated by both GABAergic and NMDA-receptor mediated glutamatergic neurotransmission [1]. Sleep spindles have been reported (at face value) for all tested mammalian species. Considering animals in which sleep-spindles were studied extensively (and thus excluding results mislead by pseudo-spindles), they appear to have a conserved (across species) main frequency of roughly 9-16 Hz. The main frequency of sleep spindles appears to be conserved (across species) and to range between 9 and 16 Hz when considering animals in which they have been thoroughly investigated (and therefore removing results skewed by pseudo-spindles) [2]. A variation in the inherent frequency of frontal and posterior spindles has only been demonstrated in humans, rats, and dogs (spindles recorded over the posterior part of the scalp are of higher frequency, on average above 13 Hz). According to research, spindles, also known as "sigma bands" or "sigma waves," are crucial for both sensory processing and the consolidation of long-term memories. Until recently, it was thought that all sleep spindle oscillations in the neocortex peaked at the same moment. It was discovered that oscillations move in a circular manner across the neocortex, peaking in one region and then in a different one next to it a few milliseconds later. It has been proposed that this spindle arrangement enables cross-cortical communication between neurons [3]. The speed at which the waves move across space corresponds to the speed at which neurons communicate with one another. Although the purpose of sleep spindles is unknown, it is thought that through the reconsolidation process, they actively contribute to the consolidation of nightly declarative memory. Extensive learning of declarative memory tasks has been found to increase spindle density, and the degree of increase in stage 2 spindle activity correlates with memory performance. Spindles support synaptic plasticity, offline memory consolidation, thalamocortical sensory gating, and somatosensory development, among other things. The receptivity to sensory stimuli when sleeping is fundamentally moderated by sleep spindles, which closely modulate interactions between the brain and its surrounding environment. Spindles separate the brain from outside disruptions while you are sleeping, according to recent research, and also alter the passage of auditory information to the cortex. Another study discovered that reactivation, a crucial step in consolidating long-term memory that enhances later recall performance, is triggered by repeated exposure to olfactory cues during sleeping. In the midst of distracting outside sounds, spindles produced in the thalamus have been demonstrated to promote sleep [4]. Researchers have discovered a link between a sleeper's capacity for tranquilly and the level of thalamic brainwave activity. Since spindles are produced in the TRN, they are crucial to both sensory processing and the consolidation of long-term memory. These spindles are observed in the brain during sleep as a burst of activity that follows twitching of the muscles. Researchers believe that the brain, especially in young people, is learning which nerves control which particular muscles while they are asleep. Additionally, it has been discovered that directed remembering and forgetting, as well as the integration of new information into prior knowledge, are all correlated with sleep spindle activity (fast sleep spindles). Schizophrenia patients' brain waves during NREM sleep lack the typical pattern of slow and rapid spindles.

CONCLUSION

Familial fatal insomnia, a prion disease, is similarly characterised by loss of sleep spindles. Disorders are accompanied by variations in spindle density. Some research indicates that children with autism have more sleep spindles. Additionally, some research contends that epilepsy lacks sleep spindles. Machine learning approaches are being researched in order to create a web-based automatic sleep spindle detection system.

Correspondence to: Syeda Urooj Riaz, Department of Medicine, Jinnah Medical College Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan. E-mail: urooj_sr12@hotmail.com

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