Introduction

- Police patrol officers are faced with shift work, extended work hours, and physically and mentally demanding situations daily as part of their occupation.
- These stressors increase the risk of officers getting insufficient and poor quality sleep, which consequently leads to fatigue and impaired performance.
- In the police work environment where optimal performance is vital, lapses in attention due to fatigue jeopardize the safety of officers and the public.\(^1\)
- However, it is believed by many that selection effects in this population result in a disproportionate level of resistance to fatigue.
- Data on sleep quality and fatigue, collected from four U.S. police departments between 1996 and 1998, were used to examine this issue.

Methods

- Data from 282 police patrol officers (aged 23-59; 31 female) were studied.
- Subjects filled out the PSQI questionnaire. A PSQI global score was used as an index of sleep quality.\(^2\)

Results

- PSQI global scores ranged from 0 to 15, where higher scores were indicative of reduced sleep quality.
- When interpreting a score of ≥ 5 as clinically relevant poor sleep quality,\(^2\) it was found that 48.9% of police patrol officers experienced poor quality sleep.
- There was a significant negative relationship between PSQI global scores and responses for feeling tired at the beginning of a work shift \((r = -0.47, P < 0.001)\). Reduced sleep quality was associated with police patrol officers feeling tired more often at the beginning of a work shift (See Fig. 1).

Conclusion

Police patrol officers showed an inverse relationship between sleep quality and self-reported fatigue. This indicates a susceptibility to fatigue, and the potential to suffer the debilitating consequences of poor quality sleep. Our finding stresses the importance of managing fatigue in police patrol officers.

References