NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Kids with autism and related disorders are prone to sleep disturbances but a new study finds that screen time, especially in the bedroom, may make their sleep problems worse.

When researchers compared boys with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) to other boys, they found that all the kids with bedroom access to media slept fewer hours, but the relationship was twice as strong for the boys with autism.

"In-room media access was associated with about 1.5 fewer hours of sleep per night in the group with autism," said Christopher R. Engelhardt, who led the study at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

"This association can potentially be problematic, particularly if the reduction in sleep interferes with other daily activities, such as school, homework, interactions with other people, or driving," he told Reuters Health in an email.

Past studies suggest that up to 80 percent of kids with autism, and related conditions like Asperger syndrome, experience sleep troubles, including difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep through the night. Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) also are
known to have a high rate of sleep disturbances.

With both conditions, it's unclear why sleep is so difficult. Theories include a disruption in sleep-wake cycles that are regulated by the hormone melatonin, which is often deficient in kids with ASDs, Engelhardt and his colleagues write in Pediatrics.

Because kids with autism spectrum disorders, like those with ADHD, also tend to spend a lot of time watching TV and playing video or computer games, the researchers wondered whether that could be contributing to their sleep problems.

So they recruited the parents of 49 boys with autism spectrum disorders, 38 with ADHD and 41 comparison boys with typical development to fill out questionnaires about their children's bedroom screen access and sleep patterns. All the kids were between ages eight and 17.

Boys with autism who had TV, computers or video games in their bedrooms got less sleep than all the other boys, including boys with autism who didn't have media in their bedrooms.

Without a TV in their room, boys with autism spent an average of about nine hours sleeping, compared to less than eight hours among kids with an ASD and a bedroom TV.

In contrast, bedroom TVs didn't seem to make a difference for boys with ADHD or typical development.

Boys with autism with computers in their rooms slept nearly two hours less than boys with autism and no bedroom computer.

A lot of time spent playing video games, regardless of where they were located, was also linked to shorter sleep times among boys with ASDs.

Even for typical children, too much time with TV or video games has been linked to attention problems, hyperactivity, arguments and physical fights, Engelhardt said.

"We can't say that access to a TV causes less sleep," only that the two are linked for some kids, he said.

Last month, the American Academy of Pediatrics called for limiting screen time for all kids to
one or two hours per day (see Reuters Health story of October 28, 2013 here: http://reut.rs/18utYNm).

"This is a good recommendation for all children," Dr. Beth Marlow, Burry Chair in Cognitive Childhood Development and director of the Sleep Disorders Division at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

"Following this recommendation for kids with (autism spectrum) and ADHD is good, although children with (autism spectrum) or ADHD who are still having difficulty with sleep despite limiting electronics really deserve a sleep evaluation by their pediatrician or sleep specialist."

Sleep troubles can also stem from anxiety, sleep apnea, pain that the child might not be able to express, gastrointestinal problems or seizures, she said.
The number of international students studying at Missouri's colleges and universities continues to grow, while more Missouri students also are studying abroad, according to a report.

A report from the Institute of International Education said more than 17,300 international students enrolled at a Missouri college or university during the 2012-13 academic year, a 7.7 percent increase over the previous academic year, The Joplin Globe reported Sunday (http://bit.ly/1io4pG8).

More Missouri students also are studying abroad. The institute's report said 4,938 Missouri students studied overseas during the 2012-13 academic year, an increase of more than 300 from the previous year.

The University of Missouri-Columbia has the largest number of international students, with 2,490. Other universities with high international enrollment are Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri State University in Springfield, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Lindenwood University in St. Charles, according to the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

"International education fosters an exchange of cultural experiences and ideas on our campuses and in our communities that is crucial in our global society," said Britta Wright, chairwoman of Study Missouri, a consortium of more than 40 colleges and universities that promotes international study.

International students also are an economic boon for Missouri, spending an estimated $452 million during the 2012-13 academic year, the report said.

Gustav Kennestig, a native of Sweden, is studying marketing on a soccer scholarship at Crowder College in Neosho. He said he was homesick at first but enjoyed the soccer season and has made friends in Missouri. He is one of 61 international students from 29 countries currently attending the college.
"It feels like Americans are so much more open and can talk. I really like the people here," he said. "It can take a while, when you go to a new (soccer) team, to get to know the new guys, but here it was like two or three days."
Number of international students in Missouri rises

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Information from: The Joplin (Mo.) Globe, http://www.joplinglobe.com
MU invests in Arizona observatory

Monday, November 18, 2013 | 3:44 p.m. CST; updated 8:32 p.m. CST, Monday, November 18, 2013

BY STEVEN BENNA

COLUMBIA — MU is buying into an observatory in Arizona with the intention of using its telescope to do deeper research and increasing opportunities for students.

The investment in the WIYN Observatory in Tucson will give the university more consistent and reliable access to a high-powered telescope, allowing 15 nights of research per year. Without the buy-in, the observatory is available to whomever wants to use it, but getting access is a competitive process, said Angela Speck, MU director of astronomy.

Students in the astronomy program will have opportunities to go use the telescope and do more extensive research.

The 3.5-meter diameter of the WIYN telescope is between eight and nine times larger than that of MU's telescope, said Eric Hooper, interim director of the WIYN Observatory. The larger area allows the telescope to collect 75 times more light in the same amount of time, he said.

Smaller telescopes, such as the 16-inch telescope at MU's Laws Observatory, are often used for education and public outreach, though they can be used for research, too. Large telescopes, such as the WIYN telescope, are used for research and advanced education, Hooper said.

The telescope's ability to collect more light "allows you to see things that are more faint," Speck said.

She said the increase in size is comparable to using a camera with more pixels and will result in a significant increase in detail.
The power and clarity of the telescope will allow Speck to keep up on one of her interests: looking at molecules. She compared molecular activity to what happens in neon lights, where electrons absorb energy and you can see them moving. Electrons in molecules can use shock waves or energy from nearby stars to move and emit light, which Speck can watch at the new observatory.

Because Columbia has "such terrible light pollution," Speck said, a larger telescope would not work as well in Missouri as it does in Arizona.

In addition, low atmospheric turbulence, which are irregular air motions, near the Arizona telescope allow the telescope's two cameras to take very sharp images, Hooper said.

**MU's use of the telescope will begin Aug. 1.** The university will pay an annual fee of $130,000 to use the telescope. This year, the provost's office and the Physics and Astronomy Department paid $80,000 and $50,000, respectively, Speck said.

Speck said some observatories eventually close because they don't have enough funding. MU's investment will help fund the WIYN Observatory, which will also help ensure that the university will have long-term access to an observatory.

"It's a realization for the future that funding for science will be bad, so it's become an imperative to buy into a telescope," Speck said.

The WIYN Observatory is part of Kitt Peak National Observatory in southern Arizona. The facility is owned by the WIYN consortium, which is made up of the University of Wisconsin, Indiana University, Yale University and the National Optical Astronomy Observatory.
Students at town hall meeting speak of feeling excluded at Homecoming

Monday, November 18, 2013 | 11:15 p.m. CST

BY MOLLY DUFFY

COLUMBIA — MU students discussed how to make Homecoming traditions more inclusive at a town hall meeting Monday night.

MU graduate student Jimmie Jones, who came up with the idea for the meeting, said he wanted to talk about Homecoming because he feels isolated during the event. Those feelings mainly stem from being a black man from inner-city Detroit, he said.

"I wanted to create a space for students to come and express their raw feelings regarding their experience at Mizzou during Homecoming," he said.

Homecoming is divided not only by race but between students who are in sororities and fraternities and those who aren't, said MU graduate student Jayme Gardner, who helped set up the event.

"As a non-Greek member, I felt excluded (from) going to Talent Night and stuff like that," she said.

About 50 people attended the event at the Physics Building, including Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs, and Robert Ross, coordinator of affinity relations for the Mizzou Alumni Association.

Other than Jackson Hobbs, Interfraternity Council president, no member of MU’s Greek community spoke at the event.

Jones said he was disappointed by the lack of representation from Greek students, pointing out that the audience was mostly black.

"We tried to influence the influencers, and obviously it wasn't influential enough," he said.
Jones organized the event as part of the Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education graduate class, which requires students to organize town hall meetings as final projects.

The event didn’t aim to find a solution to the isolation some students feel during Homecoming week, Gardner said. Instead, it aimed to reach a point of understanding.

Marnae Chavers, president of the Legion of Black Collegians, said that her group's Homecoming events are sometimes misunderstood.

"The thing that I don't like is the constant dialogue of, 'Why are black people isolating themselves?'" she said.

The Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Association are overrepresented at Homecoming, said Payton Head, chairman of the Missouri Students Association's multicultural issues committee.

The divisions during Homecoming week aren't just between black and white and Greek and non-Greek, he said. Other minorities also experience isolation.

Andrew Abarca, chairman of the Hispanic American Leadership Organization, said his organization's events usually only attract Hispanic students.

"Hispanics don't really have a Homecoming," he said. The organization throws its own events as a way of "making it a familiar experience for us."

The core of the issue is "a combination of ignorance and inaction," Hobbs said.

Chavers agreed. "I feel like the information is out there, but there has to be an internal drive."

Head said encouraging students from different backgrounds to participate in events could help breach divides during Homecoming.

Building personal relationships between the groups could help bring people together during Homecoming, Hobbs said.

"I'm not naive enough to think that that building process happens instantaneously," he said.
Nixon shows shift to left during second term

By DAVID A. LIEB The Associated Press

Monday, November 18, 2013 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — Missourians, meet your new governor: Jay Nixon, a Democrat.

Although he has long worn the Democratic label, Nixon could have easily passed himself off as a moderate Republican during his first four years as governor. He cut taxes, spending an

Since he won re-election a year ago, however, Nixon has shifted noticeably leftward. He sought to expand Missouri's Medicaid eligibility under Obama's health care law. He vetoed a big income tax cut and numerous other bills passed by the Republican-led legislature. And this past week, Nixon came out in support of gay marriage.

"I think he's rediscovering his Democratic roots in time for whatever it is he chooses to do in 2016," when voters will next elect a president, said Peverill Squire, a political science professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Because of term limits, Nixon cannot run again for governor. He already has served 16 years as state attorney general and six as a state senator. And he recently told The Washington Post he has no desire to run for the U.S. Senate.

Nixon's recent actions seem to confirm he's not thinking about another Missouri campaign, or at least not trying to position himself for one.

"I think his shift — in particular on gay marriage, which really flies in the face of popular opinion in Missouri — is a real clear signal ... that he's not considering any sort of statewide run," said George Connor, head of the political science department at Missouri State University.

Connor added: "It seems to me that he's positioning himself for a broader audience — he is moving significantly to the left."
Over the past decade, Missouri voters have rejected gay marriage and twice rebuffed key parts of Obama's health care law. Yet support for a federal health care overhaul and gay marriage almost appear as a prerequisite for Democrats wanting to step onto the national political stage in the future.

Vice President Joe Biden and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton — the most well-known of the potential 2016 Democratic president candidates — both have announced their support for gay marriage. So has Obama.

Nixon convened a Capitol news conference this past week to announce that he was directing the Missouri Department of Revenue to accept joint income tax returns filed by same-sex couples who get legally married in other states.

He noted that Missouri still has a constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage. But Nixon said he no longer supports that and hopes voters get a chance to repeal it. The pronouncement was significant because Nixon shied away from any discussion of gay marriage during his re-election campaign.

"Many Missourians, including myself, are thinking about these issues of equality in new ways and reflecting on what constitutes discrimination," Nixon said this past week. "For me, that process has led to the belief that we shouldn't treat folks differently just because of who they are."

Nixon added: "I think if folks want to get married, they should be able to get married."

The new Nixon is a politician who could be accepted by national Democrats yet could still boast of his conservative fiscal management of the state's budget, Squire said.

"He' somebody who wouldn't offend liberals but could play up his moderate credentials," Squire said.

Nixon's evolving positions have been accompanied by an expanded travel itinerary. In September, Nixon went to New York to participate in a panel discussion about natural disasters that was hosted by the Clinton Global Initiative. In October, he went to Chicago for what was billed as a bipartisan governor's forum on leadership in crisis.

Connor and Squire both discount a potential Nixon presidential campaign. But they say he might want to be considered for vice president, a top Cabinet spot such as attorney general or some other position in a future Democratic administration.

Nixon has not publicly discussed what he wants to do after his term as governor ends.

It's possible Nixon could simply retire from government and politics. He will be a month shy of age 61 when his term ends in January 2017. That's plenty young enough for a continued career in politics. And that could help explain Nixon's new tone.
"I think he wants to elevate his position within the party nationally," Squire said.

Posted in News, Wire on Monday, November 18, 2013 2:00 pm.
China vice premier lauds university partnerships

NO MU MENTION

A high-ranking Chinese official is in Chicago to help promote cooperation between U.S. and Chinese universities.

Vice Premier Liu Yandong (Loo Yahn-DOHNG’) joined university presidents from both countries Monday for a roundtable at the University of Chicago.

She says China is committed to widespread institutional reforms in areas like the economy and environmental oversight — and higher education partnerships are an important component.

She also says the exchange of students and teachers between the countries can lead to solutions for such global challenges as security, climate change, diseases and poverty.

President Obama four years ago announced the 100,000 Strong Initiative to send American students to China for study and cultural exchanges.

The vice premier and Secretary of State John Kerry on Thursday will co-chair the U.S.-China Consultation on People-to-People Exchange.
For some MU students, the recent tornadoes hit close to home

Monday, November 18, 2013 | 5:19 p.m. CST; updated 10:27 p.m. CST, Monday, November 18, 2013

Residents across the Midwest are recovering after storms and damaging winds destroyed homes and property on Sunday. | THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BY JESSICA ANANIA

COLUMBIA — As tornadoes swept across the Midwest on Sunday, MU junior Kristen Shookman tried frantically to call her parents and sister in Washington, Ill.

Nobody was answering her calls.

Hours later, Shookman finally reached a family friend and learned that the family's house had been hit. Her family escaped, but the home was destroyed. She immediately drove home to help her family wade through the debris and pack up their belongings.

"It's indescribable," Shookman said. "I couldn't tell where the streets were anymore. All the houses were leveled."

Thousands of families are grappling with loss after thunderstorms and tornadoes pummeled 12 states throughout the Midwest over the weekend, with Illinois hit the hardest. At least eight people have died, hundreds have been injured and tens of thousands were without power, according to The Associated Press.

Other MU students were caught traveling during the storms.

MU junior Kyle Bauche saw one of the tornadoes on Sunday while he and a friend traveled from Indianapolis to Columbia on Interstate 70.

Several miles east of Vandalia, Ill., Bauche looked out the passenger window and saw a funnel cloud touch down. Debris whipped across the highway, and tractor trailers wobbled precariously.
"My friend who was driving had a really hard time keeping the car straight on the road," Bauche said. "It was unbelievable."

Some students couldn't reach their families because of power outages caused by the storms. In Missouri alone, Ameren reported that more than 40,000 customers were without power on Sunday.

MU junior Matthew Cassidy's hometown of Peoria, Ill., was also in the path of a tornado.

"I got woken up on Sunday by my friend running into my room and asking if my family was OK," Cassidy said. "I had no idea what was happening."

Cassidy's family survived the storm and his home remained unscathed. He said several of his friends and extended family experienced severe property damage, however.

On Monday afternoon, Shookman was preparing to leave Washington, Ill., after spending the day helping her family pack up its belongings. Her two brothers also took a train from Chicago to help out.

She described the experience as overwhelming.

"I just wanted to get back to Columbia," Shookman said. "I just couldn't handle it."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.
Supervising editor is Richard Webner.