College Students' Sleep Article Proves Much More Popular Online

By Erik Lief — August 14, 2018

While everything that's written these days is geared towards the internet and the online world, I frequently find it interesting to compare a particular article to its version in print. One reason is to compare how the piece is presented to readers.

While flipping through the printed version of *The New York Times* science section, ScienceTimes, I stopped to read an interesting piece on how college students regularly undervalue sleep, and how the lack of it prevents them from reaching their "academic potential."

Great topic to read up on. However, this column was tucked inside the section, appearing on page D5. More than likely the story's placement indicated how popular the newspaper's editors thought it would be for readers, who also figured that pieces titled "Subduing Hemophilia" and "Explorations in Inferno Physics" were more interesting to "lead" the section. All well and good. No criticism warranted.

Fair enough, but what happened online? How did readers respond there?

The story on students and sleep deprivation was the #1 trending story. Not just science story, but the top-viewed story overall.
Under the headline of "An Underappreciated Key to College Success: Sleep," [2] written by veteran Personal Health columnist Jane E. Brody, the article makes a terrific point that among all the strategies and approaches to doing well in college – cramming, pulling all-nighters, visiting 24-hour libraries, and the like – perhaps the best method of all is to get a good night's sleep on a regular basis in order to reset a student's brain each day to function most efficiently.

"College students who fail to adopt more wholesome sleep habits are more likely to find themselves unable to handle their chosen course load," she writes in Tuesday's print edition, "and less likely to reach their academic potential, according to a national study of more than 55,000 college students."

While we often have trouble with the Times’ science and health reporting – in fact, that took place just the other day [3] – it's only fair that when the paper hits the nail on the head we point that out as well.

Brody's article is timely for students who are about to make their way to college campuses, and it's also spot on because it once again reiterates how important adequate sleep is to one's overall health – and productivity. [4] Students should read it. Parents should point it out for their young-adult students to read.

And that's what's probably taking place online, as the article is most likely being shared and emailed by families and friends.