**TEXT A - Desperate Parents Turn to Melatonin Amid Healthcare Delays -**

In dark car parks, exhausted fathers exchange packets of melatonin gummies. Other parents quietly slip it into their children’s drinks. Some wait months for a prescription, then buy it “off-label.” Behind these covert actions lies desperation—families driven to the edge by chronic sleep deprivation.

Jen remembers the first time she gave melatonin to her six-year-old son, David. “He just passed out in front of the TV. That never happens,” she says. The gummies came from a friend, a paediatrician who used them for her own child. Her husband collected them in a car park—“like some black-market deal,” she laughs, though the sleep deprivation was no joke. “They were like gold dust.”

In the UK, melatonin isn’t illegal, but it's a prescription-only medicine. It’s usually prescribed only to children diagnosed with autism or ADHD, following an assessment by a paediatrician to rule out physical causes of sleep issues. Side-effects can include dizziness, nausea and daytime drowsiness.

Elsewhere in Europe, melatonin is more accessible but still subject to the same paediatric guidelines. In the US, it’s unregulated and marketed directly to children. Some brands feature teddy bears or cartoon characters. There, one in five children under 14 now consumes melatonin regularly. In contrast, British parents are increasingly turning to the internet to source it—without medical supervision.

David had been sleepless since infancy. “We never had evenings. Sometimes we put him to bed at midnight,” Jen recalls. Despite routines and soothing rituals, nothing helped. The family suspected neurodivergence: David could count to 20 at 18 months and complete complex puzzles. He has since been identified as gifted and has waited two years for an autism assessment. When they lived abroad, a paediatrician prescribed melatonin, and their lives changed instantly.

But back in the UK, access is far more restricted. One therapist even told a mother: “If you give your child melatonin, I’ll have to report you to social services.”

Professor Paul Gringras, a paediatric sleep expert, explains melatonin’s crucial role. “It synchronises the body’s internal clocks,” he says. “Although it’s seen as a supplement, it’s actually a hormone.” Children with autism often produce less melatonin, while those with ADHD produce it far later in the night. Sleep deprivation in such cases can have far-reaching effects, including parental burnout and family breakdown.

Still, Gringras emphasises that medication should follow behavioural interventions. In trials, 50% of autistic children responded to behavioural support alone. Melatonin, he warns, must not become a quick fix for an overstretched system. “Writing a prescription is faster, but it’s not correct.”

Many parents, unable to access support, self-medicate their children. Charlotte, whose daughter Edie was later diagnosed with autism, describes sleepless nights, aggression, and mental health crises. Melatonin helped, but when she admitted using it without a prescription, she was threatened with a social services referral. “It was terrifying,” she says.

In the US, poison control cases linked to melatonin in children have surged. A 2022 study found wildly inconsistent dosages, with some gummies containing up to 50mg—far beyond the 0.5–1mg recommended for children.

Practitioners like Kerry Davies stress the need for behavioural support alongside medication. “Parents are often failed by the system,” she says. Tailored interventions, like regulating wake-up times or adjusting activity levels, can transform sleep patterns. But access remains uneven across the UK.

Ultimately, these stories reflect a broken system. Long diagnosis waits, limited behavioural support, and a lack of guidance leave families with no option but to act on their own. “We don’t even know the long-term effects of melatonin,” Gringras admits. “But if a child’s not sleeping, the parents are crumbling—it tips the balance.”

Adapted from the Guardian 600 words – June 2025

**TEXT B - Protesters Across Europe Unite Against ‘Touristification’**

Campaigners in several southern European cities have launched coordinated protests against the increasing dominance of tourism, a phenomenon they describe as “touristification.” This term reflects more than just the presence of large numbers of tourists—it suggests a deeper transformation of urban life, where cities are reshaped to cater to visitors rather than residents.

The most extensive protest of its kind took place last weekend in cities such as Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Lisbon, Genoa, and Venice. Demonstrators demanded a fundamental change to an industry they say is undermining their communities. In Barcelona, 600 to 800 people marched through the city centre chanting, “Your holidays, my misery,” and holding banners that read “Mass tourism kills the city” and “Their greed brings us ruin.” Protesters used water pistols, flares, and stickers that read “Neighbourhood self-defence, tourists go home.”

Genoa's activists staged a symbolic act by dragging a cardboard cruise ship through the old town’s narrow alleys to highlight how tourism disrupts local life. In Lisbon, campaigners carried a statue of Saint Anthony—symbolically “evicted” from his church—to the planned site of a luxury hotel, suggesting that not even saints are safe from the consequences of mass tourism.

A common thread among all the demonstrations was frustration over a system that, according to campaigners, benefits a few while damaging the many. They argue that mass tourism drives up housing prices, damages the environment, and creates unstable, low-paid jobs. This model, they say, funnels wealth to investors and business owners, leaving locals struggling with the consequences.

Despite some alarmist media reports, organisers emphasised that tourists themselves are not the enemy. “We don’t blame people for going on holiday,” said Asier Basurto, a member of San Sebastián’s “tourism degrowth” group. “Our fight is with those who exploit housing markets, underpay workers, and profit from turning our cities into theme parks.”

These protests stemmed from a conference held in Barcelona earlier this year, where activist groups from Spain, Portugal, Italy and France coordinated their efforts under the name “Southern European Network Against Touristification.” Despite geographic and cultural differences, the groups discovered they faced remarkably similar challenges.

In Ibiza, where the protest slogan was “The right to a dignified life,” activist María Cardona described severe water shortages and rising living costs. “Public fountains have been turned off due to drought, but hotels and villas keep filling their pools,” she said. “Many local workers are now living in vans or tents.”

Similar concerns have arisen in Venice, where short-term holiday rentals now outnumber permanent homes. “Venice is becoming an ATM for a small group of investors,” said Remi Wacogne from Ocio, a civic group focused on housing. “They are making money by turning homes into tourist properties.”

In Genoa, the protest’s organiser summed it up: “Tourism is being used to extract value from our cities. But these aren’t mines—people live here.”

Central to the movement is a shift in language. Campaigners are moving away from the term “overtourism,” which implies the solution is simply fewer tourists. Instead, they focus on “touristification,” which highlights how cities are being commodified for consumption. Manuel Martin from Lisbon’s Housing Referendum Movement warned that this process “erodes a city’s identity,” replacing traditional places like century-old bookshops with generic, tourist-focused businesses.

The water pistol has become a symbol of the protests in Barcelona, ever since a few demonstrators used them to spray tourists last year. While media outlets framed the act as aggressive, local campaigners insist it was peaceful and symbolic. “A water gun is a toy,” said Daniel Pardo Rivacoba. “If we want to talk about violence, let’s talk about evictions, labour exploitation, and overloaded public services. That’s the real violence touristification brings.”

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