

Sleep Distracters in Hospitalized Clients

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Abstract

Sleep is a basic human need. It is a state of rest accompanied by altered consciousness. Although the exact function of sleep is unclear, people spend one third of their lives asleep. Proper sleep is important to health as good nutrition. Sleep is required for many reasons: to rest mind and body, to prevent fatigue, to conserve energy, to cope with daily stress. Inadequate amount of sleep decreases the concentration, ability to make judgment, and increases irritability. It promotes proper day time functioning. When people are admitted to the hospitals several things change for example, ordinary daily routines are disrupted by a hospital admission which includes eating habits, elimination pattern and also the sleep-wake pattern. Some commonly seen sleep disturbing factors in the hospitals can be broadly classified into three categories. Environmental factors such as noises made by machines, door footsteps of visitors, very bright or dim light in the rooms. Physical Factors such as physical pain, nausea, coughing, difficulty in breathing, ways of drug administration. Psychological factors such as change in environment, financial burden, care of family members at home, outcome of the disease, fear of death etc. Nurses, because of their 24-hour contact with patients is in the best position to recognize and resolve or alleviate these sleep problems. There are some of the strategies that can be used by nurses to eliminate such factors and promote healthy sleep included in the present article.

Keywords: Sleep, Distracting factors, Reducing strategies

Introduction

Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together – Thomas Dekker

Sleep is a basic human need. It is a state of rest accompanied by altered consciousness. Although the exact function of sleep is unclear, people spend one-third of their lives asleep. The advice that “everything will look better after a goodnight’s sleep” is based on the belief that it promotes physical wellbeing.¹

Proper sleep is important to health as good nutrition. Sleep is required for many reasons: to rest mind and body, to prevent fatigue, to conserve energy, to cope with daily stress, etc. Inadequate amount of sleep decreases the concentration, ability to make judgment, and increases irritability. It promotes proper daytime functioning.²

When people are admitted to the hospitals, several things change, for example, ordinary daily routines are disrupted by a hospital admission which includes eating habits, elimination pattern and also the sleep-wake pattern. Patients are expected to adapt to different rules and routines. “I didn’t sleep a wink in the hospital”, “You won’t sleep in the hospital” or “You’ll get addicted to sleep medication in the hospital,” a restatement commonly cited by patients.³ However, these are personal statements. Although the function of sleep is still surrounded by much controversy, a restful sleep is considered as necessary for recovery. A poor sleep has its influence on daytime functioning and gives an unsatisfied feeling. Promoting and maintaining sleep is generally recognized as a nursing function. Nightingale (1859) in her *Notes on Nursing* stated that “never to allow a patient to be waked, intentionally or accidentally, is a sine qua non (essential)

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for good nursing. If he is roused out of his first sleep, he is almost certain to have no more sleep.”⁶ The acceptance of the nursing diagnosis “sleep pattern disturbance” by the North American Nursing Diagnosis Association is merely because of the fact that a good night’s sleep belongs to the domain of nursing. “Sleep pattern disturbance” is defined as the state in which disruption of sleep time causes discomfort or interferes with an individual’s desired lifestyle. Thus nurses play a major role in promoting effective sleep in the hospitals.⁴

Commonly Seen Sleep Disturbing Factors in Hospitals

Some commonly seen sleep disturbing factors in the hospitals can be broadly classified into three categories:

Environmental factors such as noises made by machines, door footsteps of visitors, very bright or dim light in the rooms, doctor’s interruption, nursing care interventions, staff talking at the bedside, use of mobile phones by self or other patients.

Physical factors such as physical pain, nausea, coughing, difficulty in breathing, ways of drug administration, frequent procedural interventions such as NG feeding, urinary catheterization, pain at the IV site, frequent medication, reduction of movement in the bed, immobilization of a body part.

Psychological factors such as change in environment, financial burden, care of family members at home, outcome of the disease, fear of death, fear of hospitalization, fear of change in body image due to disease condition.

Strategies that Nurses Can Use to Reduce Sleep Distracters

Nurses, because of their 24-hour contact with patients are in the best position to recognize and resolve or alleviate these sleep problems. Unfortunately, nursing education books contain only limited information on sleep, sleep problems and possible interventions on sleep. The question is whether nurses have the ability to assess the sleep problems of patients accurately, and what care do they provide to enhance the hospitalized patients’ sleep?

Some of the strategies that nurses can use to reduce such distracters can be summed up as:

Reducing Environmental Distractions in Hospitals

- Close window curtains if street lights shine through.
- Close curtains between clients in semiprivate and larger rooms.
- Reduce or eliminate overhead lighting; provide a nightlight at the bedside or in the bathroom.

- Close the door of the client’s room.
- Adhere to agency policy about times to turn off communal televisions or radios.
- Lower the ring tone of nearby telephones.
- Discontinue use of the paging system after a certain hour (e.g., 21:00 hours), or reduce its volume.
- Keep required staff conversations at low levels; conduct nursing reports or other discussions in a separate area away from client rooms.

Reducing Physical Disturbances Related to Patients

- Remove devices connecting in the body (such as BP cuff or pulse oximetry) in the night time after consulting the doctor.
- Provide symptomatic treatment for discomforts such as pain, nausea, difficulty in breathing, coughing, altered body temperature, etc.
- Procedural interventions such as catheterization or NG feeding should be done at least 2 hours before bedtime.
- Advise patient to take bath before sleeping in order to decrease too much sweating that can disturb the sleep.
- Administering medication in less painful ways.
- Try to keep the same sleep schedule every day. Limit the difference to no more than about an hour.

Reducing Psychological Factors that May Disturb Sleep

- Explain about the disease condition the patient is suffering from to reduce stress related to the illness.
- Explain about the hospital policies, orient to the ward, and financial requirements to decrease anxiety due to admission in the hospital.
- Discuss the investigations done with the patient and explain about the possible outcomes of the disease that may stress the patient.
- Give spiritual freedom to a critically ill patient, if they have fear of death.
- Prepare the patient psychologically for the changes in body image or changes in lifestyle due to illness.

Conclusion

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and wellbeing throughout our life. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety. The way people feel while they are awake depends on what happens while sleeping. Sleeping pattern changes while a person is hospitalized and that leads to delayed recovery and poor health. There are a lot of factors that can disturb sleep in hospitals and nurses can play a major role in eliminating these disturbances by following certain guidelines.

Conflict of interest: None

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