

Too much work and not enough sleep? A multi-centre, cross sectional study exploring the sleeping habits and confidence in sleep counselling in medical students

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INTRODUCTION

Sleep is a crucial aspect of overall health with numerous studies demonstrating its importance in supporting physical and mental well-being¹. Medical professionals face significant demands on their time and energy, which can lead to inadequate sleep patterns causing a subsequent reduction in work productivity and efficiency. This study seeks to explore sleeping habits, knowledge of sleep physiology and confidence in sleep counselling amongst medical students.

METHOD & RESULTS

This cross-sectional study had a cohort size of 48 undergraduate medical students aged 18-28. Data was collected from 5 different universities across England and Wales through a self-administered survey between 01/12/2022 to 01/04/2023. First to fifth year medical students as well as students undertaking an intercalated degree year were invited to complete an anonymised survey designed for the purpose of this study. The survey employed 5-point Likert scales and short answer questions to quantitatively assess the sleep quality of medical students as well as confidence in sleep counselling. The results obtained were analysed and compared amongst all participants.

This study received 48 responses from first to fifth year undergraduate medical students. The study found that 47.8% of respondents averaged 7 hours of sleep per night with 26.4% of respondents reporting poor quality sleep across more than 3 nights per week. 54.5% of participants disagreed with feeling confident in counselling patients on the importance of sleep and general sleep health advice. In addition, 60.8% of medical students reported being aware of current sleep guidelines and recommendations whilst 98% of respondents felt counselling patients on sleep was very important. The average final year medical student reported having received less than 4 hours of formal lectures on sleep in total and felt their knowledge and confidence on the topic of sleep and consequent patient counselling would increase with more teaching.

CONCLUSION

This study posits that for medical students to become well-rounded healthcare professionals, it is imperative that they consider factors such as their own sleep quality, their knowledge pertaining to sleep, and their proficiency and confidence in delivering effective sleep counselling. These competencies and insights collectively amplify the potential benefits to patient well-being, thereby contributing to overall health outcomes. To bolster the confidence and proficiency of future physicians in this regard, proactive interventions and enhanced integration of sleep awareness within the curriculum emerge as pivotal measures. Subsequent research endeavours should persist in scrutinising clinicians' self-assurance in sleep counselling and their depth of knowledge, while concurrently promoting awareness of the pivotal role played by sleep quality in sustaining optimal physical and mental health.



REFERENCES

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