



MEASURING ONCOLOGY NURSING-SENSITIVE PATIENT OUTCOMES: EVIDENCE-BASED SUMMARY SLEEP-WAKE DISTURBANCES

Sleep-wake disturbances are prevalent and distressing symptoms for people with cancer and their caregivers. Oncology nurses have under-recognized and under-treated this common problem associated with cancer and cancer treatment. Few research reports regarding sleep-wake disturbances have been disseminated in the oncology nursing literature. This evidence-based summary focuses on what currently is known about sleep-wake disturbances in people with cancer and how nurses and healthcare team members can measure this symptom in the clinical or research setting. This summary was reviewed and critiqued by research and clinical content experts in March 2005.

Key points

1. Definitions and criteria for sleep-wake disturbances are available in the *International Classification of Sleep Disorders (ICSD): Diagnostic and Coding Manual*.
2. Practice guidelines are available for several types of sleep-wake disturbances, but no specific guidelines have been established for sleep-wake disturbances for people with cancer.
3. There is limited evidence to support the reliability and validity of instruments to measure sleep-wake disturbances in people with cancer.
4. There is beginning evidence to support the use of a variety of non-pharmacologic cognitive-behavioral interventions to relieve sleep-wake disturbances.

Recommendations

1. All people with cancer should be screened routinely for sleep-wake disturbances and, if the screen is positive, receive further assessment.
2. When sleep-wake disturbances are identified, the incidence, intensity, and distress of associated cancer- and treatment-related symptoms also should be assessed and treated.
3. Nurses can teach patients and caregivers about good sleep hygiene measures to improve sleep and make referrals to sleep specialists if poor sleep continues.
4. All cancer-care providers and nursing students need to have knowledge regarding sleep-wake disturbances and excessive daytime sleepiness and skills to screen, assess, and intervene.
5. Nurses should continue research efforts to address the gaps in existing knowledge in order to develop evidence-based guidelines in the future.

Topics for Future Research

1. Establish reliability and validity of established sleep-wake instruments in people with cancer.
2. Conduct descriptive studies using reliable and valid instruments to determine the prevalence, severity, and distress of sleep-wake disturbances in people with cancer (various diagnoses and stages) and their caregivers.
3. Design and test interventions to promote health-promoting sleep-wake patterns in children, adolescents, adults, and older adults with cancer and their caregivers.

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