Sleep Distractors and Patients’ Perceptions

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Sleep is a basic human need. It is a universal process common to all people. It is considered a state of consciousness in which the individual's perception and reaction to the environment are decreased. Minimal physical activity, variable levels of consciousness, change in the body's physiological process and decreased responsiveness to the external stimuli characterize it. It takes up approximately one third of all day but varies individually. Some people function quite well on as little as five hours of sleep whereas others require more than ten hours to feel refreshed and alert throughout the day.

The amount and quality of sleep are influenced by a number of factors. Age, temperament, state of mind, health status, degree of fatigue, physical conditions or comfort, nutrition intake and many drugs like nicotine, caffeine etc. may cause difference in sleep pattern.

During the hospitalization, sleep of persons can easily be changed by illness or hospital routines. The extent of change depends on their physiological and psychological state and environment. The most important distractors are loud and unfamiliar noises, irritating lights and frequency of therapeutic procedures that are particularly troublesome for hospitalized patients. Three types of noises i.e. environmental, procedural and staff communication are reported to be the sleep distractors of the patients. The studies also indicated that patients having hypoxia, hyperapnia, gastric or duodenal ulcers and those who need to urinate during night are likely to have disturbed sleep.

The available literature does mention about the studies conducted abroad regarding the sleep distractors while the patient in the hospital but in Indian scenario such type of studies are not traceable. Keeping in mind that the findings of present study would be useful for the nurse administrators to explore, plan and direct the nurses to minimize the sleep distractors of the patients during their stay in the hospital, this paper is focused on following objective:

Objective
To identify the sleep distractors perceived by patients during their stay in the hospital.

Methodology
The study was conducted in medical, surgical and specialty wards of Nehru Hospital, PGIMER, Chandigarh during the year 2003-2004. A convenient sample of 150 patients who fulfilled the criteria of minimum of 5 days of hospitalization, conscious, able to respond and answer the questions, were selected as study sample.

The data was gathered with the help of pre-tested semi-structured 'Interview schedule'. It consisted of two parts: in part I, questions related to socio-demographic variables like age, gender, qualification, occupation etc. were included. In part II, the questions were on sleep distractor affecting their sleep.

A verbal consent was taken from the sister in charge of each unit. The patients were explained and their consent was taken to participate in the study. After getting clearance from ethical committee, the Institute gave the financial support. The descriptive and correlation statistics were used to analyze the data.

Result and Discussion

Characteristics of subjects:
Of 150 subjects, 50 (33.3%) subjects were from medical units, 47 (31.3%) were from surgical units, 29 (19.4%) from cardiac units and 24 (16%) were from orthopedics and eye, ENT units.

The duration of stay in the hospital prior to data collection varied from 5 days to 103 days with an average stay of 16 days = 15.2 days. Forty seven (31.3%) subjects were on mild sedation and rest 103 (68.7%) were without sedation.

The subjects were of the age range between 20 to 72 years with an average 40.8 years + 14.5 years. Maximum of them (32.7%) were of the age range between 20 to 30 years, followed by age range between 40 to 50.

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years (24%), only one subject was 72-year old. Education qualification wise, majority of them were either illiterate or studied up to primary school. Only 25 (16.7%) were graduate or above graduate. Majority of patients (n=85) belonged to high Hindu caste. About 67% were from rural background and 52 out of 55 female patients were housewives. Maximum 14% were engaged in manual work, 12% in agriculture, 16% in government and private job, only 3.3% were students and same numbers of subjects were unemployed. Majority of them were with low socioeconomic status.

Gender wise, 95 (63.5%) were males and rest were females. As per the family income, 71 (47.3%) were having less than Rs. 500/- family income per month, 36 subjects had income Rs. 500 to 1000 and 26 subjects with Rs. 2001 to 4000 and only three subjects were income having more than Rs. 6000/- per month.

Perceived Sleep Distractors
The data revealed that during hospitalization about 24% patients reported that often or very often negative thoughts during day and during sleep time had disturbed their sleep. The sleep of about 90% of patients got disturbed due to negative thoughts that came into their mind during daytime as well as during bedtime. Forty (26.7%) were not able to sleep very often or often as they were worried about their illness and 98 (63.3%) had reported financial, personal and health related problems as the causes of their disturbed sleep very often or often. About 35% patients reported the feeling of loneliness in the hospital and were very depressed. Seven (4.7%) patients could not sleep, as they were not able to adjust with the change in their life style during hospitalization. Similar findings were also reported by the studies conducted abroad, whereas psychological stressors, anxiety or worries, change in the life style affected their sleep.

About one third of patients that due to pain that they could not sleep the previous night and about 10(6.6%) patients had disease related problems like cough, fever etc. that affected their sleep. The studies have also reported that pain has been linked to the inability to sleep in several situations including medical and surgical conditions.

It was well documented in the literature that hospital routines have been in place for years that disrupt and prevent patients’ sleep. In the present study, 85.4% patients reported that often or very often treatment related tasks by the nursing staff during night hours and early in the morning had often disturbed their sleep.

Hospital ward routines like emptying of suction machines/bottles, sweeping and cleansing etc carried out by servants and Safai Karamcharis were also found to be distractors to their sleep, as reported by 12(8.0%) patients. Ringing of telephone bells and walking into the corridors of the wards by the hospital staff during night hours made them awake. The study conducted by Vickey (2000) reported that the environment noises including ringing phones, talking, voices of hospital staff, equipment sounds from suction machines, mechanical ventilators and lights have accounted for distraction of sleep.

In conclusion, the sleep of patients during their hospitalization was disturbed due to psychological, physiological, hospital related routines and environmental noises in the wards. There is a need that nurses should keep a record of patients’ sleep and try to minimize the distractors to promote sleep of patients during stay in the hospital.

References