Sleep Quality as an Important Metric

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As dental sleep medicine providers, it is important that we are aware of recent research providing insights into the impact poor sleep quality can have on our patients' lives. Below are summaries of a few recent publications on this topic:

Global Sleep Report
(Full Text)

Purpose: To better understand the state of sleep quality around the world. Researched quality and quantity of sleep, respondent's satisfaction with both, what stops sleeping, and the consequences of both a good and a bad night's sleep on mood, relationships, and work productivity.

Study Design and Population: Fifth annual Global Sleep Survey running from December 12 to 28, 2024 reaching 30,026 people across 13 markets (countries).

Main Conclusions:
- Although many respondents report ~7 hours of sleep, the report frames the current issue as a sleep-quality crisis rather than a sleep-duration deficit.
- Sleep-related breathing disorder (SRBD) symptoms (e.g., snoring/gasping reported by a partner) are highlighted as a leading external disruptor of sleep quality at the population level.
- Birth sex- and life-stage differences have a prominent effect on sleep, with women reporting fewer good nights of sleep, underscoring the need for targeted screening and support. Menopause related sleep disturbances were present in 51%.
- Five countries have over 1/3 of the respondents using sleep trackers and 3 countries over 50% of respondents using smart phone sleep apps.

National Sleep Foundation (NSF) Sleep in America
(Full Text)

Purpose: Polling the critical connection between sleep health and various dimensions of well-being including happiness, productivity at work and home, goal achievement, and a fulfilling social life…collectively considered "flourishing."

Study Design and Population: Survey conducted via randomly recruited address-based cohort to respond to online survey between September 19-30, 2024 with 1372 U.S. adult respondents.

Main Conclusions:
- Using validated sleep-health instruments, NSF reports that sleep satisfaction is strongly associated with overall well-being ("flourishing"), with flourishing rates higher among those satisfied with their sleep (68% vs 47%).
- Across multiple life domains, sleep satisfaction outperforms sleep duration as a predictor of day-to-day functioning, emphasizing that "good sleep" is more than meeting an hourly target.
- Engagement in sleep-health behaviors is linked to better outcomes in happiness, home functioning, work functioning, life goals, and social life, supporting Healthy sleep improves likelihood of flourishing.

Sleep Irregularity & Circadian Rhythmicity
(Abstract)

Purpose: Determining the importance of sleep regularity contribution to health and well-being.

Study Design and Population: Review article on the associations between sleep irregularity and a variety of health outcomes and potential mechanisms mediating these relationships.

Main Conclusions:
- This review positions sleep regularity/irregularity as a distinct dimension of sleep health, with circadian rhythmicity providing a framework for understanding why timing consistency may matter for health.
- The authors synthesize evidence suggesting that irregular sleep timing (often seen with "social jetlag" and weekend shifts) can be a meaningful signal of circadian disruption with downstream health implications.
- Clinically, the paper supports moving beyond "average sleep hours" toward evaluating pattern stability (regularity metrics) when assessing risk and advising patients.

Pain as a Mediator between Sleep and Recovery
(Abstract)

Purpose: Clarifying how pain affects the relationship between sleep and recovery.

Study Design and Population: Data collected from 250 patients who underwent laparoscopic cholecystectomy in a university hospital.

Main Conclusions:
- In postoperative recovery, sleep quality is a significant positive predictor of recovery, indicating that better sleep is associated with better perceived/functional recovery outcomes.
- When pain is added to the model, the sleep-recovery effect is reduced but remains significant, suggesting pain partially mediates (but does not fully explain) the relationship between sleep and recovery.
- These findings support a combined clinical strategy by addressing both sleep quality and pain, rather than treating either factor in isolation.

CITATION

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