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# Sleep Health

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## The reimagining of sleep and health

The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) is constantly monitoring for signs that the state of sleep health is improving. Our *Sleep in America* poll, quarterly *Sleep Health Index* (SHI) and other studies are a few of the ways we measure progress. Our SHI reports are consistently showing that we are indeed making progress. Sometimes, it is helpful for us to step back from our careers as researchers, clinicians, and academics to assess the current landscape.

In the last 25 years, we have become increasingly aware of the depth and complexity of sleep disorders. Diagnostic equipment in the sleep lab remains essentially the same, but home monitoring is now an option for certain diagnoses, improving availability to patients. Personal monitoring devices continue to improve in accuracy. Treatment options for sleep disorders now include cognitive behavioral therapies, control of the color of light exposure to manage the circadian timing of sleep, and new therapeutic options targeting different neurotransmitter subsystems. My practice is busier and the patients I see have changed—from the first encounter to ongoing management of their conditions, patients today are actively engaged in their care. They understand that sleep is vital to their health, but often remain challenged to prioritize and allocate the necessary time for sleep and to implement treatment strategies. I no longer have to sell patients on the importance of sleep, as NSF's sleep health message to the public is being heard.

Education regarding sleep apnea has clearly made its mark. I rarely see a new patient referred for snoring who does not recognize that sleep apnea is a possibility, though subtle presentations of sleep apnea may remain elusive. Patients concerned about daytime tiredness often assume that the problem must be with nocturnal sleep quality. Public education regarding primary disorders of alertness and circadian rhythm disorders is still lacking. Patients are well-educated and often come prepared with informed questions about behavioral and therapeutic options, risks and benefits. Insomnia sufferers have often tried behavioral strategies, OTC medications,

herbs and supplements but to no avail, so they come to our practice seeking our care.

Management of the sleep patient today is a partnership—acknowledging their research, introducing new diagnostic possibilities and providing education, coaching and guidance. Understanding how patients see things is important and refreshing. I am encouraged to learn of the many things they do to improve their sleep, and I work creatively to help them find the correct diagnosis and viable treatment plans. Working together with educated patients has become the “new normal” for the journey to better sleep. As clinicians and academics, we focus on sleep disorder treatments and solutions, but we are also thought leaders in the sleep field, so it's fitting that we unite to celebrate and champion all aspects of sleep health.

Every aspect of sleep will be represented at NSF's *Sleep Show* (March 8–10, 2019) in Houston, TX. The public interest and understanding of sleep are driving a new era in sleep products and accessories that enhance and celebrate the sleep experience. *Sleep Show* itself is meant to be a consumer *experience*. Educational content will play a central role in the event and will spotlight the incredible work being done by many of you in this space. Sleep health is a spectrum, and we all play a vital role.

I hope you will join me in Houston!

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