

The case for including sleep and sleep problems in OT undergraduate and postgraduate education

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Background: Sleep takes up a third of our life, and we can't do without it. Poor sleep is linked to physical problems including diabetes (Spiegel et al. 2005) and hypertension (Meerlo et al. 2008). Circadian rhythm disruption in shift work has been shown to increase cancer risk (Haus & Smolensky 2013). Poor sleep also impairs recovery from mental health problems (Krystal et al. 2008), and affects quality of life (Kyle et al. 2010). Research has shown sleep helps us to process learning and encode memories (Wamsley & Stickgold 2011), sleep helps us to process emotions (Van der Helms & Walker 2009), and that poor sleep increases risk taking behaviour (Womack et al. 2013). It seems clear that to optimise occupational functioning, sleep should be considered and addressed.

Unbelievable that we have missed out this important issue in our daily treatment! – sleep course participant ZHAW (2016)

As OT's we should be more aware of the relationship between sleep and daytime activity (Green & Brown 2015)

OT's often feel uncertain of the best practice in relation to sleep (Faulkner & Mairs 2015)

Sleep

Circadian rhythm

Individual sleep needs

Ergonomics and sleep

Environmental Adaptation

Standardised Sleep Assessments

Impact of sleep on occupation

Relaxation techniques

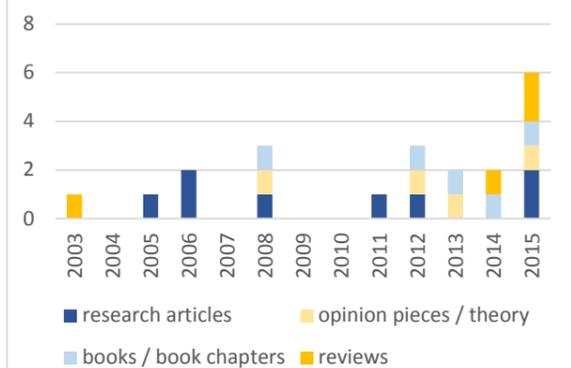
Cognitive strategies and activity scheduling

Assessing sleep within holistic OT Assessments

Scoping Review:

Systematic searches completed in 2012 by the authors, and repeated in January 2016, revealed few articles mentioning sleep and occupational therapy. Although limited, the amount of relevant literature is rapidly increasing.

Sleep related Occupational Therapy publications



International experiences in including sleep in OT education:

At the ZHAW (CH) sleep is included in the undergraduate course with 4 lectures, and a two day postgraduate course is also run. At the University of Alberta (CA) sleep is part of the *Enabling Occupation and Participation* course covered in a 90 minute lecture using the MOHO framework. Amongst research possibilities, an elective gives students the opportunity to learn more about sleep. At another University in the United States classes about sleep last from 1 to 3 hrs and the topic is included throughout the rest of the courses in case studies. **Recommendation:** Sleep should be included throughout the curricula, and across all OT fields.

References:

- Faulkner, S. & Mairs, H., 2015. An exploration of the role of the occupational therapist in relation to sleep problems in mental health settings. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 78(8), pp.516–524.
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- Wamsley, E.J. & Stickgold, R., 2011. Memory, Sleep and Dreaming: Experiencing consolidation. *Sleep Med Clin*, 6(1), pp.97–108.

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New OT Sleep Network: www.sleepot.org