



News Notes

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UNCERTAINTY, STRESS & ANXIETY: A CLOSER LOOK AT SLEEP'S ROLE FOR TOTAL PERSON WELL-BEING (SEPTEMBER 29, 2020)

Many people are unaware that they have a sleep disorder that is affecting their daytime alertness and mood, as well as their overall health, said Alp Sinan Baran, MD, Medical Director, Sleep Charge by Nox Health. During the September 29th webinar, Uncertainty, Stress and Anxiety: Uncovering Sleep's Role for Better Well-Being, Dr. Baran and Shannon Cyr, MSW, Vice President of Care Operations, described their services, provided information about sleep, and discussed ways to improve one's quality of sleep.

"Many people don't even make a connection between their sleep and the daytime consequences they may be suffering," Dr. Baran said. "Often people learn to live with their chronic sleep disorders and accept them as normal, not realizing that they can be addressed and improved." Common symptoms that may indicate a sleep disorder include: feeling fatigued, morning headaches, memory issues, difficulty concentrating, feeling anxious, irritability, loss of interest, daytime sleepiness, restlessness while asleep, snoring or gasping for air while asleep, or relying on naps or caffeine to function. If a person experiences one or more, they should consider having a sleep test.

Sleep Charge is a sleep clinic that uses medical treatment processes in a virtual way. "The specialty of sleep disorders in medicine is perfectly suited for telehealth," Dr. Baran said. "An excellent level of care can be delivered in the home. Our telehealth platform allows for even closer monitoring and managing of care." To diagnose and treat sleep disorders, Sleep Charge's board-certified sleep physicians meet with patients online. Then, using assessment results, a team of sleep experts create a personalized, comprehensive care plan. The treatment model provides a circle of care, enabling patients to enter as needed.

Sleep Charge also offers resources for people without a significant sleep disorder, such as tools to help wind down at night or feel more alert in the morning. Dr. Baran explained that there are three equally important building blocks of sleep: How long you sleep, when you sleep, and how well you sleep. "We need to have all three in place to achieve healthy sleep," he said. It has been well established that sufficient, high quality sleep is important to good health. Chronic and persistent sleep problems can adversely affect the immune system, as well as cause weight gain and increase one's risk of diabetes and high blood pressure. The brain and body suffer as a result of an inadequate amount of or poor quality of sleep.

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Behavioral conditions, such as anxiety or depression, which are often identified through a sleep study, can also influence sleep quality. In turn, sleep is very important to emotional health and stability. The cyclical relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression and poor sleep is well known. Improving sleep can have a major positive impact. Even one night of poor sleep can heighten emotional reactivity and persistent poor sleep can affect personality. After receiving treatment, patients often remark that their family has noticed they are less irritable and grumpy.

Suddenly working from home can affect sleep. It is important to schedule specific times for sleeping and to keep your work hours to a specific time and place. For people who work evening, night, or rotating shifts, getting adequate sleep is particularly difficult, as our brains can adjust only about an hour a day. For those who do shiftwork, try keeping your schedule as regular as possible, even on days off and keep the room dark if you're sleeping during the day. If you're coming home from a nightshift, avoid bright light by wearing sunglasses on your drive home. If you can't get adequate sleep, take a short nap during the day – not more than a half hour in length and not too close to bedtime. Use caffeine in moderation and timed away from bedtime, and be mindful that products like energy drinks, sodas, teas, and chocolate, which can have a lot of caffeine. Sleep aids should also be avoided. If you must use one on occasion, take a minimal dose of melatonin at least eight hours before you need to be awake. Higher doses or stronger sleep aids could cause you to be drowsy the next day and can create dependency.

To get a good night's sleep, Dr. Baran and Cyr offered the following tips for a better sleep: Sleep in a cool, dark, environment dedicated to sleep. Equip your sleep space with comfortable bedding, black-out curtains and a fan to improve your sleep. Make sure you don't have too many or too few blankets. Keep your sleep environment free of disturbances, such as pets in the room. Avoid activities like TV, scrolling through your phone and eating in your bedroom. Allow your brain time to wind down – turn off all screens at least 30 minutes before you go to bed and try reading or some nighttime yoga. If you're in bed and are having trouble sleeping, don't focus on the time - If you've been awake at least 20 or 30 minutes and can't sleep, go to a quiet place, such as the living room and do a very quiet activity. Avoid eating three hours before bedtime and use a wedge pillow if you have acid reflux or respiratory congestion. "Your day actually starts with the night before," Cyr said. "If you want to have a great day, you want to make sure you have great sleep the night before." In the morning, have a wakeup routine. Turn the lights on in your home and create the effect of sunlight. "If you're driving into work or you like to exercise outside in the morning, don't wear sunglasses," she said. "That way your eyes and your brain will have access to natural light and you will feel much more refreshed."

For additional information, please contact Larry Baird, SleepCharge's Vice President of Business Development at (804) 994-7713 or lbaird@noxhealth.com.

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ABOUT SLEEPCHARGE

SleepCharge by Nox Health is here to make the world a more rested place—giving employers and sleep-deprived people everywhere one source for healthy sleep.

ABOUT SHANNON CYR



Shannon Cyr is the vice president of SleepCharge Care Operations and has more than 25 years of experience in counseling and social work. She oversees the Care Team, Medical Management Team, and Participant Engagement Team.

ABOUT ALP SINAN BARAN, MD



Dr. Baran is a board-certified psychiatrist and sleep medicine physician. He received his medical degree from the Ohio State University College of Medicine and completed his post-graduate training at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Michigan. He served on faculty at the Medical College of Pennsylvania, as Director of the Sleep Disorders Center at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and as Director of Sleep Clinics at the University of Michigan Medical Center. Prior to joining SleepCharge and Nox Health, he served at the Naval Hospital Jacksonville Sleep Disorders Center for active-duty U.S. Navy personnel.

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