

# EDUCATION AND AWARENESS: ENSURING THE FUTURE OF SLEEP MEDICINE

by Joshua Cole RPSGT



Sleep disorders are alarmingly prevalent among the general population, yet the public is essentially unaware of sleep medicine and its limitless applications. In the midst of an exciting time of expansion, Sleep Medicine, however, is quickly being established as an essential component of the medical world.

The medical community as a whole has increased its knowledge by not only embracing sleep medicine, but also by creating and supporting outlets through which professionals can access information pertinent to the ever-changing discipline of sleep medicine and related fields of study. Sleep disorders span all branches of medicine. The importance of education traverses medical disciplines and also affects the general public, individual healthcare consumers, and particularly those most closely involved with the practice of sleep disorders medicine. We as medical professionals in all disciplines need to focus on maintaining a level of comprehension that fosters a culture of relevant knowledge that can be clearly passed on to the public.

Reports have shown that more than 60% of primary care patients interviewed consecutively for one year presented symptoms of sleep disorders highly likely to be confirmed through polysomnographic testing; however, nearly all had not been previously diagnosed with a sleep disorder. The increased interest and improved recognition of sleep disorders in the primary care patient population has aided the development of sleep medicine. Most will agree that major sleep disorders such as sleep apnea,

narcolepsy, and insomnia are more common than previously thought and easy to diagnose. The public, on the other hand, needs more exposure to sleep disorders medicine. The generic education offered to the public is simple and straightforward, almost too much so. We've all seen the television advertisements for sleep aids along with the suggestion to 'ask your doctor.' The truth is the general public does not have sufficient information to use in making educated decisions about what to ask doctors about and what to ignore. As mentioned before, sleep disorders encompass all branches of healthcare. Efforts to educate the public should be paramount in strategies concerning the medical community and allied healthcare.

Very few people suffering from sleep disorders know enough to demand attention from their family physician. Along with that, insurance companies are still lagging behind when it comes to understanding the potential cost savings created by sleep medicine. The information to educate every group, regardless of medical discipline or status in the general population, exists and should be introduced and circulated in a concerted communications effort. For example, there is documentation to support that the majority of injuries from traffic and work accidents can be avoided by the recognition and treatment of excessive daytime sleepiness. It has also been shown that

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randomization was successful as no characteristic was significant between the two groups of patients. Effectiveness of DuoNeb™ was, in fact, better than the individual component medications, i.e., synergy was present.

The **Conclusions** were DuoNeb™ was equal to or better than separate use of albuterol and ipratropium bromide for patients with COPD. Therefore, in this project, the Hypothesis was supported, corresponding to a "yes" answer to the Question. (Note: When writing the Conclusion, the Hypothesis must be addressed whether it was supported or not.)

The **Reflections** offers an opportunity to critique the research project, suggesting possible modifications that would improve the quality of the research. For example, patients with COPD responsive to albuterol and ipratropium bromide were selectively recruited for this study. This research project did not address whether patients with spirometry unresponsive to bronchodilators should receive them. Reflections can also include a comparison with similar research projects.

**Future Research** is important because research should lead to more research. For example, this project could lead to a larger, multi-site project based on the same experimental design.

References from similar research and the reference for non-parametric statistics are included in the **Bibliography** section.

**Acknowledgement** offers credit to those who assisted in the research project, both by time/effort and by financial support. The acknowledgement included Respiratory Care practitioners who participated and the financial support from Dey Labs.

**Conflicts of Interest** are listed for all Respiratory Care Practitioners and others participating in authorship of the project. Conflicts include ownership of stock or receipt of services or gifts from companies related to the project.