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## Sleep awareness and education among clinical practitioners

In the past 3 decades, the frequency of sleep complaints has increased.<sup>1</sup> Most recently, in a study of Hirotsu *et al*,<sup>2</sup> 76% of the Brazilian population reported at least one sleep complaint – comprising insomnia, sleep apneas and snoring. Despite these alarming findings, the number of individuals seeking medical services for sleep problems did not change.<sup>1</sup> These results may be distinctly interpreted. In part, there is still a lack of qualified health professionals and centres to diagnose and manage sleep disorders. In contrast, the patients often do not receive enough information about sleep, impairing perception of their sleep symptoms.

Health professionals frequently do not receive an adequate educational background in sleep medicine. Consequently, several health professionals are not trained to recognise and treat sleep disorders, especially in primary healthcare. Less than 3 hours is the mean duration dedicated to sleep education in medical schools around the world.<sup>3</sup> Most alarmingly, data show that only 17 minutes is reserved for paediatric sleep topics. Because of this lack of education, there is still a low rate of diagnosis of sleep disorders – less than 1% in some communities.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the general population, one of the most effective strategies is to promote access to information via public events or social media, including television and websites. Access to information has increased in recent years, augmenting the coverage of health issues, particularly sleep disorders. Information, education and communication strategies have been effective in raising awareness and improving self-reporting of several diseases.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, educational and awareness programmes about sleep are important; they are potential public health strategies to improve the self-reporting and perception of sleep symptoms by patients. Scientists and clinicians have an essential role in disseminating information, educating society and influencing public policies with the goal of increasing sleep awareness.

In summary, for an improvement in management of sleep disorders, we should consider two main factors:

- 1 Patients should be aware of the consequences of sleep disorders, in order to promote better symptom perception, self-reporting and encourage patients to seek medical services.
- 2 An adequate sleep educational background is warranted for health professionals. Adequate training of physicians and practice nurses, particularly in primary care, has the potential to improve patient access to sleep services, which may benefit some regions where the access to specialist services can be limited.

The current situation highlights the importance and necessity of developing sleep awareness and qualification programmes for clinicians around the world. ■

## Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

## Author contributions

All authors contributed to study concept, drafting of manuscript and critical revision of manuscript for intellectual content.

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