Student Perceptions of Importance Level of Sleep Promotion Message Content
Dayna Gettel, Undergraduate Nursing Honors Student
Dr. Pat Carter, Faculty Sponsor
Fall 2015

Abstract

Purpose: Sleep is an essential aspect of life that affects academics, social functioning, and physical and emotional health. Because college students often do not realize how at risk they are for negative effects of sleep deprivation, constructing messages that will reach this group is a challenge. Therefore, it is critical to design messages that will focus on the areas college student’s find most important. This study seeks to discover which sleep information is of most interest and importance for college students. This data can be used to design future health promotion messages for this at risk population.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive correlational study design was used to determine students’ sleeping patterns, mood and sleep topic interest rankings. The sample includes the University of Texas full-time students. An on-line survey is sent out containing two PROMIS sleep scales (Sleep Disturbance Scale & the Sleep Related Impairment Scale), the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CESD) scale, and sleep health promotion topic rankings.

Findings: 149 students completed the survey. Students are primarily female (84%), Caucasian (62%) and in their first two years of college (74%). Students reported moderate sleep disturbance and impairment and depressive symptoms. Participants ranked the interest and importance of sleep topics in the following order: #1 academic impact (e.g. study time, test performance); #2 social impact (e.g. relationships); #3 physical health (e.g. sick days, athletic performance); and #4 emotional health (e.g. mood).

Conclusions: College students are at increased risk for sleep deprivation; however, they do not often recognize this risk. Based on the findings here, in order to change this perception in college students, future public health messages should target the impact sleep deprivation has on academics, social functioning, and health.

Acknowledgement: This project was supported in part by an Undergraduate Research Fellowship from The University of Texas at Austin Office of Research.