

Presentation 4- The impact of fatigue on occupational therapists

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Sleep is an essential component to health and wellbeing. Everything we do, including work, is influenced by sleep, yet the impacts of sleep deprivation and fatigue continue to be overlooked. The aim of this presentation is to outline the potential impacts that workplace fatigue can have on occupational therapists.

Sleep should be viewed from a bio-psycho-social lens because it influences, and is influenced by, **biological, psychological, and social factors** which include things such as digestion and muscular strength, concentration and memory, along with social behaviors and interpersonal communication (Backer & Nussbaum, 2011; Boyt Schell, Gillen, & Scaffa, 2014; Caruso & Hitchcock, 2010; Green, 2008; Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, 2010; Simon-Thomas, 2007; Work Safe Alberta). The potential factors influenced by sleep are provided in order to promote greater understanding of the potential impacts that fatigue may have on individuals.

Potential short and long term physical, cognitive, social and health impacts of fatigue are outlined in the accompanying audio-video presentation. These impacts include, for example, slowed reactions, difficulty concentrating, increased susceptibility to illness and infection, and strained interpersonal relationship, aggression, lack of insight, unsafe decision making, and increased risk taking behaviour (Backer & Nussbaum, 2011; Caruso & Hitchcock, 2010; Green, 2008; Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, 2010; Work Safe Alberta, 2010-2011).

The impacts of fatigue, whether short or long term, hold the potential to **influence an individual's performance at work**. For example, an individual may experience impaired insight, judgment and decision making which may lead to an increased number of **patient care errors** (Backer & Nussbaum, 2011; Caruso & Hitchcock, 2010; Green, 2008; Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, 2010; Work Safe Alberta, 2010-2011). In establishing how the short and long term impacts of fatigue can affect work performance, the importance and relevance of this topic to occupational therapists is further emphasized in the accompanying audio-video presentation.

The audio-video presentation concludes with a review of the potential consequences that fatigue can have within everyday life and stresses that workplace fatigue effects not just the individual occupational therapist's health, well-being, and safety, but also that of patients/clients, co-workers and family. A primary aspect of workplace fatigue is insufficient sleep and further information regarding sleep and its effects can be found by visiting the following links: www.SleepRight.ualberta.ca, <http://www.sleepassociation.org/index.php>, <http://www.css.to/>, <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>.

References

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