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Improving patients sleep: Reducing light and noise levels on wards at night

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Much research has been undertaken regarding the psychological and physiological effects of sleep deprivation on patients in hospital. However, there are very few suggestions regarding measures that could be taken to address this. Members of the Acute Care Team (ACT) visit the wards at night and have become increasingly aware of the high noise and light levels during these times. We care for critically ill patients in general wards and have noticed an increase in the length of stay along with other complications that may be caused by inadequate and interrupted sleep. Two audits were carried out in 2015 to assess noise and light levels on wards at night, with the aim of offering suggestions regarding ways to reduce recovery time and length of stay. A survey of the light levels was undertaken in addition listening to the noises on the wards between the hours of 23:00 and 03:00. Some objections were voiced as some staff understood us to be asking them to work in poor lighting as opposed to low lighting conditions, and to be silent when carrying out their work. The repeat audit indicated that the majority of wards had adopted the recommendations, many noting that their patients now appeared less confused and more settled. It is possible, with low- and no-cost interventions to reduce noise and light levels on the wards, thus enhancing recovery. Further studies could be undertaken to look at specific issues and discussion regarding the maintenance of the new measures.

Biography

Carol Hewart has completed her Degree in Health Studies. She has 12 years Renal Nursing experience before moving to Operational Support for three years. She is currently a Clinical Site Manager and Specialist Nurse. She has published nursing related journal articles.

Loveday Fethney has a Cardiac Nursing background of eight years. She has worked in both Domestic and International Settings. She has completed her BEd (Hons) in 2010 and is currently an Education Lead and a Specialist Nurse in Acute Care Team.

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