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Medical Student Knowledge of Narcolepsy

Alyssa Sinko, BS, and Karl Doghramji, MD*

Background: Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder, whose main symptoms include daytime sleepiness, cataplexy, sleep paralysis, disturbed sleep, and hypnagogic hallucinations. The disorder is poorly identified in medical settings. We hypothesized that lack of knowledge of narcolepsy and its hallmark symptoms are a cause for the low levels of identification of this disorder. This was a pilot study into medical student knowledge of narcolepsy at Sidney Kimmel Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University (SKMC).

Methods: Two groups of SKMC students, years 1 and 2 (before sleep medicine education) and years 3 and 4 (after sleep medicine education) were the subjects of this study. All students were sent a survey regarding their knowledge of narcolepsy. Results from these surveys were analyzed, and compared using a proportions test.

Results: 24.42% of first and second year students correctly chose the pathognomonic symptom of narcolepsy compared to 62.63% of that of the third and fourth year classes ($p < 0.0001$). 5.43% of first and second year students correctly chose the pentad of narcolepsy symptoms compared to 20.19% of that of the third and fourth year classes ($p < 0.0001$).

Conclusions: There is a significant difference in knowledge of narcolepsy between students who received education regarding narcolepsy at SKMC and those who have not. This suggests that the educational curriculum in sleep medicine at SKMC is effective in enhancing knowledge regarding

SI/PHR Abstract

narcolepsy. Future studies should assess other medical schools and their student's knowledge of narcolepsy to evaluate the effectiveness of medical school education regarding sleep disorders on a national basis.