

Editorial

Hurrah for Sleep Medicine!

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Recent announcements of the Nobel prize in Medicine 2017 for Circadian rhythm per gene have excited not only the field but the world¹. Scientific to popular media sources have reveled in the announcement. The implications for deeper and broader understanding of sleep based on the identified influence from the circadian rhythm have been accomplished along with a wider recognition of the importance of sleep. With this focus on the cellular determination of our biological clocks, the PER protein blocking the activity of the period gene which in effect turns itself off¹, we can continue to think and design additional studies to measure other aspects of this mechanism. At the everyday level, the wonderful findings infuse an excitement of “an answer or some answers” to the control of sleep behavior. With vast number of the population experiencing sleep disturbance, the impact of this understanding as it potential propels the scientific practioners in sleep medicine to consider additional factors related to the experiences of their patients sleep disturbances. Additionally, the alteration of the circadian sleep cycle may influence patient’s experiences of other medical conditions such as depression. Sleep researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania² reported positive effects to relieve depression in patients with controlled sleep deprivation. The dose response form of improvement in depressed patients with controlled sleep deprivation is under further study.

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Submitted: 08 March 2018**Accepted:** 10 March 2018**Published:** 10 March 2018**ISSN:** 2379-0822**Copyright**

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The number of insights from the learning of these new discoveries to the field of Sleep Medicine is too many for calculation. For example, how can we refine our techniques to study and employ an understanding of a patient’s circadian rhythm? In what way or ways can we examine the utility of controlled sleep deprivation—an alteration to circadian rhythm to enhance sleep? The advances in sleep medicine science from recent discoveries leaves us with more questions to broaden and deepen our understanding of sleep. To the scientists [1,2] that generated the mentioned research we give a large Hurrah! And thank you. We now have a new work agenda, a new pathway of conceptualizing the elements of sleep and ultimately, the generalization of the findings to practice.

REFERENCES

1. Patch CL. Nobel winners identified molecular cogs in the biological clocks that control our circadian rhythms. 2017.
2. Sleep Deprivation is an effective anti-depressant for nearly half of depressed patients. 2018.