



**Assessment and management of sleep
disturbance in people with MS: a survey of
clinical practice**

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**On behalf of
Therapists in MS (TiMS) Research Group**

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Therapists in MS (TiMS)



Therapists in Multiple Sclerosis (TiMS) is an initiative which brings together allied health professionals from across the UK who share a special interest in Multiple Sclerosis – currently about 180 members

TiMS Research Group Aims

- Select and answer clinical research questions
- Assist novice researchers
- Educate (themselves and others) through process of undertaking research projects
- Create opportunities for multi-centred research

Process

- National call for research questions – 15 responses
- Question selected: “How is sleep disturbance managed by therapists and nurses?”
- Literature review undertaken to determine:
 - Was the answer already available?
 - Was the question answerable?

Background: Sleep Disturbance

- Frequently reported in MS; far more common than in the general population (Brass et al 2010)
- Adversely affects quality of life and is related to increased risk of morbidity (Caminero & Bartholomew 2011).
- Growing evidence to support clinical effectiveness of specific non-pharmacological treatments, either alone or in combination with drugs (Sateia & Nowell, 2004).
- No literature describing what constitutes routine practice by nurses and allied health professionals

Objective

- To gain an overview of the management of sleep disturbance by UK nurses and allied health professionals involved in the care of people with MS.

Research approach and Methodology



- Cross-sectional survey using convenience sampling
- Sample: Health professionals attending the annual MS Trust Conference, UK
 - All delegates invited to participate
 - No exclusion criteria

The survey instrument

- No relevant survey questionnaire identified in literature → survey questionnaire developed
- Questionnaire development:
 - Views and resources sought (via face to face and TiMS web-based discussion forum)
 - Draft questionnaire developed
 - Questionnaire piloted with 20 therapists / nurses
 - Questionnaire refined, re-piloted with 5 therapists / nurses

Survey instrument

- 16 closed questions with categorical response options
- One open ended question for general comments
- Estimated completion time 15 minutes

Survey instrument

Divided into 4 parts:

1. Demographic data – e.g. gender, profession, work setting (6 items)
2. Whether and how sleep disturbance is assessed (4 items)
3. How sleep disturbance is managed (3 items)
4. Self-rating of knowledge and confidence in managing sleep disturbance (2 items)

Data collection

- All delegates provided with survey questionnaire in delegate packs
- Request to complete questionnaires and hand in to collection boxes during the 3 day conference period
- Participation was voluntary and anonymous
- Consent assumed if questionnaire completed and handed in (outlined in participant information sheet)

Results

- 71% response rate (181 / 256 delegates)
- 93% female (168/181)

Occupation	
Nurses	58%
Occupational Therapists	13%
Physiotherapists	21%
Others e.g. Dr's, speech & language therapists, psychologists, academics	9%
Work setting	
Part of multidisciplinary team	74%
MS specific setting	58%
Neurology specialist setting	29%

Results: Demographics (n=181)

Time since qualification	%
>15 years	77%
11-15 years	8%
6-10 years	12%
< 5 years	3%
Time in MS Practice	
> 10 years in MS practice	43%

Assessment & Evaluation (n=181)

	Yes	No	Unsure
Sleep management is part of work role	85%	8%	7%
Use a specific sleep assessment instrument		67%	
Confident with sleep management knowledge	10%		
Would value further sleep management training	49%		

- 35% unaware that specific sleep assessment instruments exist
- Variety assessment instruments used, including:
 - Epworth Sleepiness Scale
 - Visual Analogue Scale
 - Pittsburgh Sleep Diary

Key Sleep Interventions Used (n=181)

General verbal advice	81%
Verbal advice tailored to the individual	74%
Incorporated within other symptom management	72%
Within fatigue management/energy conservation programmes	61%

Discussion

- Provides an initial understanding of what is happening in current UK practice.
- Suggests sleep practice is variable and specific knowledge may be limited
- Vast majority (85%) of nurses and allied health professionals considered sleep management their role
- Despite this only 10% were confident in their knowledge of sleep disturbance
- Only 8% reported confidence in carrying out a sleep assessment

Discussion and future research

- Verification is required
- Exploration in more depth required:
 - Review current assessments
 - Investigate effectiveness of non-pharmacological sleep interventions in MS
 - Determine knowledge levels about sleep disturbance by therapists and nurses
 - Determine what type of training would be most helpful to increase knowledge and confidence

The Team

Research Team

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MS Trust Support

- Amy Bowen
- Brenda King

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