# Pursuing Advanced Sleep Practices: A Guide to Raising Quality Care in Sleep Medicine

The purpose of this guide is to assist sleep programs in identifying and pursuing advanced sleep practices that reach beyond the minimum standard requirements of accreditation by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) for further advancement of your sleep program in your community.

High-quality patient-centered care is the goal of AASM Accreditation. Comprehensive sleep programs that provide the full range of patient management and diagnostic testing, along with implementing advanced practices, are becoming increasingly important to (1) increase awareness of sleep disorders, and (2) improve continuity of patient care. This guide outlines advanced practices in the areas of clinical care, community outreach service, faculty representation, education, quality improvement, and research that will enhance your sleep practice.

As you review this guide, it is recommended that you evaluate your sleep program to determine if any of these practices can be implemented to further advance your sleep program. Implementation of these advanced sleep practices will help your sleep program lead the field in providing quality and comprehensive sleep services, aligning with the AASM's mission of "advancing sleep care and enhancing sleep health to improve lives."

## Clinical Care

- **Use of Telemedicine:** Telemedicine is becoming increasingly important due to a shortage of sleep providers, increasing health concerns, and access to care for rural populations. In addition, routine access to face-to-face encounters for patients with chronic sleep disorders has become increasingly difficult. Use of telemedicine, specific to patients who need chronic disease management, is an excellent way to stay connected and provide continual care with limited use of resources.[i]

- **Work with Accredited Durable Medical Equipment Supplier (DME):** Associating with an accredited DME supplier demonstrates commitment to providing the highest-quality service and products through compliance with national regulations and industry best standards. This leads to better customer service and continuity of patient care. The sleep program would have better access to compliance data and reports necessary in ongoing patient management and follow-up.[ii]

- **Host Case Conferences with Staff:** Routinely performing one or more reviews of pertinent sleep-related cases with staff on a quarterly basis is beneficial as it serves as a powerful tool to encourage integrated care. These reviews can help coordinate structured planning to help identify and clarify the needs and goals of patients. Case conferences encourage collaboration, communication between staff, and the sharing of important information. [iii]

# Community Outreach Service

- **<u>Provide Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) Compliance Clinic:</u>** A PAP compliance clinic is designed to encourage patient compliance with PAP therapy and provide a simple and effective means of improving treatment of OSA. It is a way of providing education, support, symptom treatment, and equipment monitoring for all PAP patients.[iv]
- **<u>Sponsor Public Educational Events:</u>** Providing opportunities to educate the community on the importance of sleep and its connection to overall health and quality of life has become increasingly important. Consider raising awareness of sleep as an essential component of health by performing any of the following events:
  - Visit schools to teach children about good sleep hygiene.
  - Provide community educational lectures about sleep topics.
  - Perform a lunch & learn to educate other healthcare providers about the importance of sleep and screening for sleep disorders.
  - Participate in community health and wellness fairs to provide educational material on common sleep disorders and free screening for sleep disorders.
  - Work with local hospitals to screen patients for sleep disorders to promote early detection and treatment of sleep issues.
- **<u>Offer Diverse Educational Materials:</u>** Sleep providers evaluate and manage diverse groups of patients. Providing educational materials that cater to the diversity and language of populations served advances patient understanding, increases knowledge, satisfaction, and safety. Strategies may include:

  - Develop educational written materials in the languages of the populations served.[v]
  - Improve access to languages served (e.g., use of an interpreter).
  - Use translated forms, screening tools to meet patient's needs.
    - Consider cultural differences when developing tools to ensure better patient understanding of sleep disorders and treatment.


# Faculty Representation

**<u>Specialty Professional Staff</u>**: The availability and use of specialty physicians may assist in the diagnosis of patients with other underlying medical conditions and/or the development of a formalized long-term treatment plan across medical specialties. This will improve continuity of care and overall patient outcomes.

- Develop relationships/partnerships (e.g., as professional staff members or consultants) with specialty physicians/providers to provide consistent ongoing assessment and management in the populations served such as:
  - Pediatric sleep disorders
  - Pulmonologists
  - Psychologists/Psychiatrists for behavioral health issues
  - Neurologists
- Develop arrangements with a qualified dentist, as defined in the [2015 AASM clinical practice guideline on the treatment of OSA with oral appliance therapy](), if the treatment plan calls for oral appliance use.

- Develop arrangements with surgeons (e.g., otolaryngologists, bariatric surgeons) capable of discussing and providing surgical options for treating patients with sleep disorders.
- Ensure availability of more than one sleep specialist to allow for ongoing treatment during times when the facility director is not available, as well as allowing for peer-to-peer review of difficult cases/case studies.

# Educational

### Professional Educational Sessions

Continuing education is a requirement in the medical field. It is important to keep all staff current on advances in sleep medicine. This will ensure all staff have a solid grasp on the fundamentals and clinical advances in sleep medicine. [vi]

In addition, it is important to bridge the gap between sleep medicine providers and advanced practice providers, other auxiliary personnel (administrative staff, medical assistants, etc.) and/or the general healthcare community. Providing educational sessions to advanced practice providers, auxiliary personnel, and other healthcare providers in the community will help improve awareness of sleep disorders.

Educational sessions for staff, auxiliary personnel, and/or the community may include:

- Providing monthly educational programs for sleep technologists and administrative staff regarding sleep disorders and advance practice guidelines.
- Hosting annual or bi-annual educational sessions for local and referring physicians to increase and broaden awareness of sleep to their patients.
- Offering CME opportunities to local providers or presenting at national or state conferences in sleep medicine.
- Offering educational sessions to allied health professionals, medical students, residents, and/or fellows.
- Reviewing case studies to further enhance provider and technical staff skills and the effects of treatment and follow-up.

# Quality Improvement

### Quarterly QA Monitoring Activities

Monitoring clinical outcome and process measures for sleep diagnoses (sleep apnea, insomnia, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome, hypersomnia, etc.) enhances the healthcare provider's ability to further provide effective treatment for all patients and prioritizes areas needing improvement. Clinical evidence supports that healthy sleep influences the medical health status of patients and improves overall quality of life. With rising costs of health care, third party payers are looking for methods to reduce cost while improving clinical outcomes. Monitoring sleep diagnoses clinical outcomes beyond what is required for AASM Accreditation is a method to demonstrate effective patient management and treatment resulting in lower health care costs. Consider monitoring more than the minimum QA metrics required by the AASM Standards for Accreditation. The AASM has developed several sleep quality measures that can be found on the AASM website. These quality measures can easily be collected and

reported through Sleep CDR, a qualified clinical data registry of the AASM. Understand how your program compares to other programs of similar size and practice by benchmarking your quality measure data through Sleep CDR. This will allow you to identify strengths and proactively develop plans to address areas for improvement ensuring your patients receive the highest quality care.

## Research

Sleep medicine has evolved in recent decades. There has been great progress in the diagnosis, treatment and management of sleep disorders and an increase in public awareness of the importance of healthy sleep and sleep disorders. The importance of sleep health has also become more recognized within the field of medicine. All patients with sleep disorders should have access to evidenced-based treatment options available at high quality, accredited sleep facilities. To continue the advancement of sleep medicine, consider having at least one staff member:

- Be a reviewer for a sleep journal.[vii]
- Be an on-going sub-investigator, investigator, or primary investigator for pharmaceutical or biomedical trials conducted at a sleep program.
- Apply for a research grant funded in sleep medicine.[viii]
- Present an oral or poster presentation annually at a professional meeting pertaining to a sleep medicine topic.[ix]

This guide outlines some advanced sleep practices that reach beyond the minimum standard requirements of accreditation that accredited sleep facilities can pursue. Implementation of such advanced sleep practices as noted above (clinical care, community outreach service, faculty representation, education, quality improvement, and research) will further advance your sleep program and position your program as a leader in the field of sleep medicine.

## Resources

To assist sleep programs in the implementation of the advanced sleep practices noted above, the following example resources are available:

[i] Telemedicine Platform (e.g. AASM SleepTM)
[ii] AASM Accredited DME Suppliers; medicare.gov Medical Equipment Suppliers
[iii] Case Book of Sleep Medicine Third Edition
[iv] Developing your PAP Compliance Program (2018 Practice Management Course)
[v] Patient Education Brochures (English, Spanish)
[vi] Physician Development (CME, MOC); Sleep Team Training (APRN/PA, A-STEP, Sleep ISR, A-CEP); Sleep Medicine Fact Sheets
[vii] Journals; Information for Reviewers (JCSM); Instructions for Reviewers (SLEEP)
[viii] AASM Foundation Research Awards
[ix] SLEEP Meeting Call for Abstracts