

Help for Snorers and Insomniacs Now Available On-Island

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Erik Wander/KMXT

People suffering from the sometimes debilitating effects of a lack of sleep now have an on-island option for determining the severity of their condition. Providence Kodiak Island Medical Center recently opened a permanent in-house sleep lab to study and monitor patients for sleep disorders.

KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

Prior to beginning the sleep lab, PKIMC outsourced its sleep diagnosis and treatment. A technician was flown in once a month to conduct diagnostic tests. Now, with state of the art equipment and a full-time staff, the hospital is able to conduct three sleep studies each week. Scott Ferguson, who also works in the hospital's respiratory therapy department, is the manager of the sleep lab.

-- (Ferguson 1 35
sec. "The impact of untreated ...
a good diagnostic test.")

PKIMC
Public Relations Coordinator Borghy Holm said treatment for sleep disorders can make a dramatic difference in people's daily lives.

-- (Holm
1 32 sec. "We've had cases where ... and not knowing it, to just a few.")

Ferguson said the first step in the study is making the patient feel comfortable and thus able to fall asleep.

-- (Ferguson
2 44 sec. "Our focus is a nice ... their
night stay here at the sleep lab.")

After patients are registered and given a tour of the facility, it's time to prepare them for their overnight stay. Ferguson explained what patients can expect and what is monitored from a nearby room throughout the night by video, audio and computer feeds.

-- (Ferguson
3 20 sec. "Measuring and marking the ... for respiratory
muscle effort.")

Working with Ferguson in the lab is Lisa Pascua, who has worked at the hospital for 23 years in a variety of positions. Pascua recently went through an intensive sleep study training program in Oregon in preparation for her new job as the sleep lab's neurotechnician. She said patients often exhibit early signs of trepidation, particularly when they first see the 24 electrodes they will be hooked up to. But she said they are quickly disarmed after an introduction to the facility and the procedure, which she describes as a non-invasive.

-- (Pascua
1 22 sec. "They think it's a harmful ... to
where they'll be hooked up.")

The sleep lab tested its first patient on May 27th, a volunteer Pascua called her "guinea pig." He also happened to be her husband. The equipment performed well, but the results of the test came as quite a surprise to Pascua, and underscored the many potential sufferers who may not even be aware they have a problem.

-- (Pascua
2 40 sec. "Never thought that he had ...
going to have that attack.")

Patients of the sleep lab need a doctor's referral. Data gathered during the study is analyzed and sent to the patient's health care provider for diagnosis and potential treatment. A second night in the lab may be ordered, during which Continuous Positive Airway Pressure or CPAP therapy is used. According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, roughly 18 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea. Symptoms include snoring, stopping breathing during sleep, waking gasping for air, morning irritability and headaches and can be caused by obesity or other anatomical factors. Other sleep disorders, including insomnia, occur in 20 to 40 percent of the population. If left untreated, sleep disorders can have adverse to severe effects on daily life.

I'm
Erik Wander.

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