

A good night's sleep

Belmont Private Hospital introduces specialised program for insomnia



significant improvement in sleep latency, total sleep time and sleep efficiency, whilst maintaining change over the long term.”

Belmont's CBT-i program

The program's facilitator, Kym Barrett, is a psychologist and sleep technologist with a comprehensive understanding of CBT, insomnia and other sleep disorders.

Patients attending the program undergo a comprehensive evaluation of sleep patterns, cognitions and behaviour related to sleep at the start and the end, using sleep diaries and validated questionnaires to measure individual progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole.

Belmont's program targets maladaptive sleep cognitions and behaviours, and utilises evidence-based therapeutic approaches including relaxation training, stimulus control therapy and cognitive therapy.

“All of these approaches have received the highest ratings in terms of clinical evidence,” said Ms Barrett, citing standards set by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

“We also include psycho-education for sleep hygiene. Although we know that sleep hygiene is not useful as a stand-alone treatment for chronic insomnia, some evidence indicates it may be useful as an adjunct to these other therapies.”

All patients are under the care of a hospital-accredited psychiatrist who collaborates with the referring medical practitioner, particularly in relation to any medical conditions that may be contributing to insomnia, as well as prescribed medications. Participants generally maintain their current medications with a gradual tapering of hypnotics as their sleep behaviours and cognitive approaches to sleep improve.

Patients referred may have a primary diagnosis of insomnia disorder with or without co-morbid diagnoses.

“This can include depression, anxiety or obstructive sleep apnea which may have been resolved but left patients with residual sleep loss,” Ms Barrett said. [PH](#)

To service growing demand for therapeutic mental health programs, Queensland's largest private mental health facility, Belmont Private Hospital (Belmont) in Brisbane's southeast, has introduced a specialised program for insomnia. The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-i) day program is a six-week program held on Tuesday evenings, with booster sessions at strategic intervals after completion.

What is insomnia disorder?

It is classified as disrupted, dissatisfying sleep that occurs at least three nights per week and continues for at least three months despite adequate opportunity for sleep. Long-term patterns of insufficient or unrefreshing sleep can have many causes such as environmental changes, unhealthy sleep habits, shift work, anxiety, depression, pain and medical disorders.

Associate Professor Sandy Sacre, senior programs manager at Belmont and long-standing member of the Australasian

Sleep Association, attests that insomnia is one of the most common health problems in the general Australian population and “is certainly the most common sleep disorder”.

Dr Sacre added, “It is inextricably linked with mental disorders such as anxiety and depression and in most cases it is difficult to know which came first.”

Why CBT?

According to the 12th annual Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) report on general practice activity in Australia (2009-2010), insomnia was treated in around 95 per cent of cases by GPs prescribing hypnotic medication.

“This is often efficacious in the short-term,” Dr Sacre said. “However, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Insomnia is more efficacious for insomnia than hypnotic medication, and is shown to be the most effective, objectively measured treatment by numerous randomized controlled trials and meta-analyses.”

She added, “Studies demonstrate