The Journal of Gerontological Nursing is pleased to publish this feature, "Try This: Best Practices in Nursing Care to Older Adults," developed by the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing. The "Try This" concept is an outgrowth of a November 1997 conference attended by representatives from national nursing specialty associations which identified the need to provide nurses with better understanding of the problems of and care options for the elderly. "Try This" articles on various topics will appear in the Journal approximately every other month. The Journal of Gerontological Nursing encourages reader feedback on this and any other feature of the Journal.

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The Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)
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WHY
Sleep is a necessary part of life. However, normal aging changes, medical problems, psychiatric problems, and psychosocial issues can alter the pattern and quality of sleep as one grows older, and thus can affect the quality of life in the older adult. Assessment of sleep patterns enables the nurse to intervene immediately by implementing interventions with the client or by referring the client for further assessment.

BEST TOOL
The Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) is an effective instrument used to measure the quality and patterns of sleep in the older adult. It differentiates "poor" from "good" sleep by measuring seven areas: subjective sleep quality, sleep latency, sleep duration, habitual sleep efficiency, sleep disturbances, use of sleeping medication, and daytime dysfunction over the last month. The client self-rates each of these seven areas of sleep. Scoring of answers is based on a 0 to 3 scale, where 3 reflects the negative extreme on the Likert scale. A global sum of 5 or greater indicates a "poor" sleeper. Although there are several questions that request the evaluation of the client's bedmate or roommate, these are not scored (and also are not reflected in the instrument on page 11). For these questions, refer to Buysse et al. (1989), in the More on the Topic section.

TARGET POPULATION
The PSQI can be used for both an initial assessment and ongoing comparative measurements with older adults across all health care settings.

VALIDITY/RELIABILITY
The PSQI has internal consistency and a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .83 for its seven components. Numerous studies using the PSQI have supported high validity and reliability.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS
The PSQI is a subjective measure of sleep. Self-reporting by clients can empower them but can reflect inaccurate information if the client has difficulty understanding what is written or cannot see or physically write out responses. Moreover, the scale is presented in English. The scale can be adapted to enable the client to respond verbally to items on the scale by having the nurse read the statements to the client.

MORE ON THE TOPIC

INSTRUMENT
The following tool represents an effective quantitative method to gather information on sleep quality in older adults. We invite nurses to duplicate the tool and encourage staff to carry it for reference.