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Volume 9, Number 1, 2022

Congress October 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085664ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v9i1.344>

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Publisher(s)

McGill University Library

ISSN

2291-918X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Grimard, N., Frija-Gruman, N. & Grover, S. (2022). A gamified sleep intervention for veterans: an overview. *The International Journal of Whole Person Care*, 9(1), 52–53. <https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v9i1.344>

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A GAMIFIED SLEEP INTERVENTION FOR VETERANS: AN OVERVIEW

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Keywords: Online sleep intervention, Preventive medicine

A good night's sleep is well known to be imperative for maintaining one's overall wellness. Yet, about half of Canadian adults struggle with falling asleep or maintaining sleep. The impacts of insufficient sleep are wide-ranging, from physiological correlates such as diabetes to mental correlates such as depression. Effective treatments for sleep-related issues exist: for example, online interventions for insomnia have been found to be effective.

As a medicine and a health psychology student at, respectively, Sherbrooke University and McGill University, we worked on the MissionVAV health promotion program during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing free gamified interventions for Canadian Veterans and their families. Over the course of several online interventions related to physical health, we observed that a large proportion of our participants were dissatisfied with their sleep. Consequently, we have developed an 8-week online sleep intervention to address this primordial element of primary prevention.

The intervention aims to better our participants' sleep through providing weekly readings on the following topics: age-related changes in sleep, proper sleep hygiene, varied relaxation techniques as well as the relationship between sleep and chronic pain, menopause, shift work, rumination, exercise and light. To promote healthy sleep hygiene habits, daily self-assessment questions are provided and are incentivized through points and storytelling. Furthermore, health coaches trained in sleep medicine follow participants throughout their journey to provide support and reinforcement. Ultimately, the intervention aims to shed light on the importance of sleep within preventative medicine, tackling it systematically in an engaging, gamified fashion. ■