“We can help them find their purpose by encouraging them to think back on their lives and identifying what events and activities inspired them and brought them joy and pride,” she said. “We can’t just ask them what their purpose in life is—it’s not that simple. It’s hard to wake up and say, ‘This is my purpose.’”

The promise of better sleep may not clarify purpose for many elders, Dr. Turner said. “You want to give them time to think about it and help them identify their purpose. You don’t want to push them and have them stressing about it.”

Although Dr. Turner and her colleagues studied dementia-free individuals, she suggested that similar techniques could be used with patients who have cognitive issues.

“I don’t know of any studies like this with dementia patients. However, you can use information from family members and other clues from their past to uncover what might be meaningful for these individuals. This is a good starting point. We need more research involving individuals with cognitive issues,” she said.

Purpose in life goes beyond improving sleep, Dr. Turner said. “People who have a purpose in life tend to be healthier in general and have less disability. If you cultivate purpose in life, it can enhance health a bit overall, and this can lower costs as well as improve outcomes.”

Dr. Turner said many people who have sleep disorders don’t talk about them. “They think this is a normal part of aging or they don’t realize that they aren’t getting quality sleep,” she said. However, as practitioners and facilities increasingly seek to improve outcomes while reducing costs and preventing readmissions, effective nonpharmacologic interventions to address common problems are worth pursuing.

“Elders have a much higher rate of sleep disorders than the younger patient population. We don’t know if [identifying life purpose] is enough, but we believe it will help. We believe there is a connection here. And we believe that we can reduce the incidence of sleep disorders in this population,” she said. “We can start by identifying individuals with sleep problems or complaints on admission.”

She urged the use of including questionnaires designed to assess sleep quality as part of the intake process.

Kindred Starts SNF Divestiture

Kindred Healthcare has completed the closing for 54 skilled nursing facilities in 10 states, the company announced in a statement. The closing is related to Kindred’s agreement with BM Eagle Holdings, LLC, a joint venture led by affiliates of BlueMountain Capital Management, LLC to sell Kindred’s skilled nursing facility business for $700 million in cash.

Sale proceeds from the closing were approximately $519 million.

“We are pleased that we have completed the initial sale of a majority of the nursing facilities held for sale and look forward to completing the remainder of the closings by year end,” Benjamin A. Breier, president and chief executive officer of Kindred, said in a press statement.

“We believe that the sale of our nursing facility operations will significantly enhance shareholder value, focus our attention to our higher margin and faster growing businesses, and advance our efforts to transform Kindred’s strategy.”

The sale includes a total of 89 nursing centers and seven assisted living facilities, which collectively have approximately 11,500 employees in 18 states. Kindred expects that the remainder of the closings will occur in phases as regulatory and other approvals are received. Kindred expects that all of the closings will be completed by year end.

“On behalf of the Kindred Board of Directors and management team, I thank all of our caregivers for their hard work to facilitate a smooth transfer process. We appreciate and respect their dedication to our patients, residents and their families,” Mr. Breier said.

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