How is sleep quality affected in people with schizophrenia?

People with schizophrenia may show disturbances in the amount or the quality of sleep they generally receive. Typically sleep follows a characteristic pattern of four stages, where stage 1 is a state of drowsiness and early sleep; stage 2 is comprises the largest component of the sleep cycle and is the first complete loss of awareness of the external environment; stage 3 is a deep slow-wave sleep; and the fourth stage is rapid eye movement (REM) sleep where memorable dreaming and muscle paralysis occurs.

Sleep disturbance can be measured in many ways, including the total sleep time, the sleep latency (the length of time it takes from full wakefulness to sleep) and the sleep efficiency index (the amount of time spent asleep while in bed). Sleep latency can have varying definitions, particularly regarding the definition of “asleep” – some studies define this more strictly as the time from lights out until 10 consecutive minutes of stages 2, 3 or 4; while other studies define the latency more leniently as the time from lights out until the first signs of stage 2 sleep.

Is there evidence of sleep disturbance in schizophrenia?

Low to moderate quality evidence suggests sleep latency is increased and total sleep time and sleep efficiency is reduced in untreated schizophrenia, of greater magnitude using a stricter definition of sleep latency.

Low to moderate quality evidence suggests stage 2 sleep is reduced in untreated schizophrenia and is of greater magnitude in never treated patients.

Keywords
Sleep disturbance, sleep latency, sleep efficiency, sleep time, stage 2, REM sleep, wakefulness.

Further information
See Technical Table