The Science of Sleep: What it is, How it Works, and Why it Matters by Wallace B. Mendelson, M.D.

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When I heard that distinguished sleep researcher and psychiatrist Wallace “Wally” Mendelson had just published a book called *The Science of Sleep*, I assumed that I would be

reading a well-researched, comprehensive, and up-to-date review of basic sleep science and clinical sleep medicine. I was right about that. What I had not expected was that I would be holding a beautifully designed and generously illustrated volume with visual appeal to match the finely written content. Indeed, the book is worthy of display rather than just sitting on a library shelf.

The Science of Sleep is a book that welcomes readers of all levels. Mendelson starts with basic concepts, presents relevant research evidence, and discusses contemporary explanations for sleep-related phenomena. He tells us what we know and how we know it, often personalizing discoveries with details that bring history to life. Whenever possible, he relates sleep science to common life experience. He shares his sophisticated and nuanced views, made possible by his own extensive background in sleep research and psychiatry.

Topics in the book include neurochemical and electrical characteristics of sleep, the regulation of sleep and sleep stages, sleep in animals and throughout the human life cycle, hormonal associations with sleep, aspects of dreaming, the effects of sleep deprivation, the relationships of sleep with medical and psychiatric disorders, and the phenomenology, etiology, evaluation, and treatment of the major sleep disorders. Special attention is given to insomnia with a review of theoretical formulations, nighttime and daytime symptoms, and behavioral, cognitive, and pharmacologic treatment approaches. There is a fine discussion of the risks and benefits of using medications to treat insomnia.

In this attractive, artistic, informative, engaging, and lucidly written book, Mendelson provides an excellent introduction to sleep science and sleep medicine. He very effectively communicates with personal insights and perspectives not possible in published meta-analyses, regulatory prescribing information, and formal clinical guidelines. *The Science of Sleep* would be a very good choice as an introductory textbook on sleep.

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