

Lab Rat

Mostly, it was worse than I thought it was going to be, but I survived. I spent the night at the hospital last night undergoing a sleep study. These are becoming increasingly common, and many people experience anxiety beforehand, so perhaps I can help by describing it to someone who doesn't know what to expect. Then again, maybe you shouldn't read this post if you're looking to be reassured...

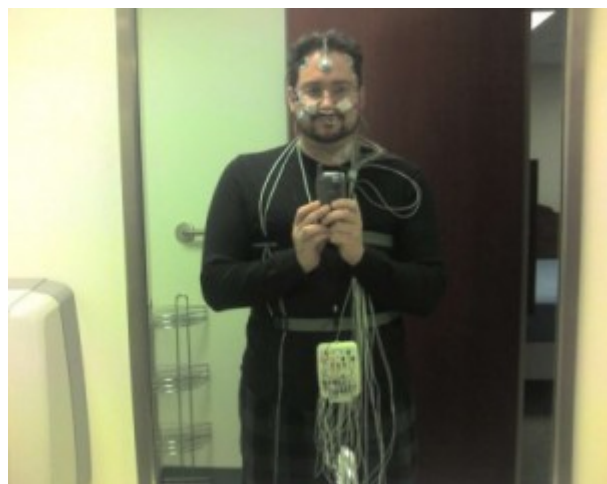
First, I got a prescription for a sleep study from my kids' pediatrician, who is also the local sleep expert doctor – I had mentioned to him that I never feel rested. So I arrived for my sleep study last night around 8 pm; usually they have you come earlier, but they wanted to mimic my bedtime schedule, and I rarely go to bed before midnight. That's funny – mimic my bedtime schedule, yet the 4 rowdy kids who usually keep me up past midnight were no where in sight, hmmm, not much mimicry there. So I waited in the lounge for a little bit for the nurse to do paperwork, which is more like a little living room that I luckily had to myself – didn't really feel like being social. Soon it was time to “hook me up” (which sounds better than it is, believe me) and we went into this little room off the lounge. I would not be exaggerating to say it was reminiscent of a clinical torture chamber. There was a simple chair bolted down in the middle of the small room, and various medical apparatuses and who-knows-what bolted to the walls, along with extra wires and electrical looking boxes and things – is this where they interrogated Saddam?

Not that I was nervous or anything because I really wasn't. I didn't like being away from my family, but I made the best of it by telling myself that I was going to enjoy the few hours away from the chaos; I had brought piles of old newspapers to catch up on and 3 hardcover books to read. And as far as the medical stuff goes, it didn't really seem like a big deal

after the 9 mos. of poking and prodding I've endured as a pregnant woman – times 4.

So I get all wired up, and after I sat in the lounge alternating between reading and watching tv (I had no idea what was even ON tv, which shows how little I watch it now), I decided that it was time for bed, and this is where things take a turn for the worse. As if the millions of electrodes the nurse had glued to various parts of my body weren't enough, she added two belts and also shoved something up my nose. That's right – they **glue** electrodes to you, disregarding your hair and everything. My kids today had fun playing with my stiff “glue hair”, but I quickly took a shower and washed it out before anyone got any ideas that “glue hair” is cool – that is one mess I don't need to clean up today or ever!

So I'm fully wired, and the nurse plugs me in, and then she leaves the room and comes over the intercom. She makes me do a series of silly actions – she said she wanted to “test the sensors”, but I was starting to think that her having me roll my eyes around in my head and demonstrate fake snoring might have just been cheap entertainment for the hospital's 3rd shift. When we were finished “testing the sensors”, the nurse turned off my light and I was expected to fall asleep, but I had lots of trouble. First of all, imagine trying to sleep while looking like this:



Not only that, but the bed was just awful, hard as a rock – I have a crick in my back today. And don't forget there is a camera and microphone on you at all times; it's a bit daunting to relax in this situation. And when they said that I could "bring my own pillow if I wish", I thought that was implying I should bring my pillow if I have some sort of special attachment to it. What they really meant was "You might wish to bring your own pillow because we only have little slabs of rubber we cover with pillowcases." Maybe they figured that if they put a pillowcase on it, they could call it a pillow, but after spending 8 hours with it, I strongly disagree.

So I had trouble falling asleep, big surprise. Not only was I so wired I felt like I could help E.T. phone home, but the bed and pillow were awful, there was a camera and a microphone on me, and the room was dark and quiet (that NEVER happens at home!). I was alone with my thoughts, and that's never a good thing ☹ It didn't help that I could occasionally hear the wind howling outside, and it reminded me of when the lights were on and the nurse was "checking" my fake snores – the lights had been flickering slightly. What if the power goes out, and there is a sudden electrical surge? Would I get shocked? Would I burst into flame? Would I disappear? Might I come away with some sort of obscure superpower? Hey, that might be kind of cool... I guess I finally drifted off, because the next thing I know, I'm waking up, even though it felt like I hadn't fallen asleep yet, and that's how I knew I still had hours left in my sleep study. Still uncomfortable, still cold, still not liking being both seen and heard while I'm asleep. And then I wake up again. Still uncomfortable, still cold... you get the picture. I must have woken up about 5 times during the night, tossing and turning each time, hoping for comfort until I passed out for good all tangled up in wires like a fly caught in a spider's web. Then I had a nightmare, and I wonder how that appeared on the charts? Finally, I hear a voice from above say "Lisa, the sleep study is over." Even though that was the best news I had heard in hours, it was a

bit unsettling to be woken up by an intercom saying my name.

Overall, it wasn't that bad, even though I was disappointed because I had been under the impression that I would be able to fall asleep easily, and that I would be in a comfy bed and stay asleep until the morning. Instead, I returned to real life very poorly rested early this morning with 3 kids to look after all day. But at least today, unlike yesterday, I can have all the coffee I can brew, and tonight I get to sleep in my own bed! Well, providing the coffee doesn't keep me up all night anyway!