

Obstructive Sleep Apnea Screening and Prevention

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INTRODUCTION: Obesity is an epidemic in the United States as well as a potent risk factor for the development and progression of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). The prevalence of OSA in the general population is 3-7% for men and 2-5% for women. OSA may be a grossly underdiagnosed disease with potentially up to 85% of patients having clinically significant undiagnosed OSA.

PURPOSE: Encourage practioners to screen patients for OSA that have known risk factors and to reinforce to practioners the associated risks of untreated OSA which include but are not limited to: coronary vascular disease, stroke, sleepiness, cognitive and behavioral impairment, diabetes mellitus, weight gain, cancer, and even death.

METHODS: A comprehensive literature review was performed using databases including, but not limited to the following: MEDLINE, Cochrane Library, CINAHL and the CDC.

RESULTS: Obesity is a major risk factor for OSA. Undiagnosed and untreated OSA has various long-term health impacts, including but not limited to the following: cardiovascular disease, stroke, sleepiness, cognitive and behavioral impairment, diabetes mellitus, weight gain, cancer, and even death.

CONCLUSION: The discordance between high rates of obesity and relatively low prevalence of OSA raises concern that OSA is underdiagnosed. It is vital for practioners to grasp the conditions that untreated OSA can lead to and to understand that certain diseases may be more difficult to manage in patients with untreated OSA. Our goal is to encourage practioners to screen and identify at-risk patients.