

STUDY SHOWS SLEEP APNEA INCREASES RISK OF SUDDEN CARDIAC DEATH

Recently, a study was published emphasizing the **correlation between sleep apnea and sudden cardiac arrest**. This new research became available on June 11, 2013, and was posted online in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. In this study a group of 10,701 men and women were



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referred for sleep studies in order to diagnose sleep apnea. These patients were followed for 5.3 years for incidents of sudden cardiac death. Results showed 142

patients died as a result of heart attacks. The most common predictors were patients over age 60, those who stopped breathing more than 20 times per hour, moderate obstructive sleep apnea (as per sleep study), and those patients having low levels of oxygen in the blood. The lead author of the study Dr. Apoor Gami, a cardiologist at Midwest Heart Specialists, Elmhurst, Illinois stated that “the prevalence of obstructive sleep apnea in western populations is high and will likely only continue to grow given

the obesity epidemic and direct relationship between obesity and sleep apnea.”

Sleep apnea has been estimated to effect as many as 20% of the adult population and research has reported that as many as 85% have been undiagnosed. The two main indicators that a patient may have sleep apnea are snoring and extreme daytime tiredness. If you think you may have sleep apnea ask your medical doctor to refer you for a sleep study at a hospital or private sleep clinic. A board certified

sleep specialist will read the sleep study and make the diagnosis.

Understanding that sudden cardiac death kills approximately 45,000 people a year in Canada should motivate us to take this matter more seriously. Dr. Deepak Bhatt, MD, MPH, FACC reported, “People at risk for sleep apnea ought to be screened with a sleep study, and potentially then being treated for sleep apnea might reduce the risk of dying suddenly.”

If the patient is diagnosed with severe sleep

apnea (stops breathing more than 30 times per hour) then the CPAP (Continuous Positive Air Pressure) device is the treatment of choice. If the patient stops breathing less than 30 times per hour the treatment of choice is an oral appliance. Patients who cannot tolerate CPAP are also candidates for oral appliance therapy according to the practice parameters from the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine set out in 2006.



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