



### **New Studies Show Sleep Apnea Affects Children As Well As Adults**

Sedona, AZ—Nearly one in eight people suffer from obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which can cause high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, obesity, and memory loss in adults. New studies show that OSA can affect children as young as two.

Dr. William P. Smith, Jr., a Sedona dentist, recently returned from the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine's 18th Annual Meeting. The meeting provides educational courses designed for practitioners of all levels. Scientific programs featuring the current news and research in dental sleep medicine were presented by 30 speakers from 11 countries.

Dr. Stacey Quo reported her findings show that one to three percent of children have OSA. Permanent heart damage has been found in children as young as two years old with OSA. Many children diagnosed with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have OSA. They are hyperactive as a result of being tired from inadequate sleep caused by OSA. After treatment for OSA, symptoms of ADHD lessened. Obese children with OSA are excessively sleepy. Non-obese children with OSA are hyperactive.

Pediatrician David Gozal, M.D. presented data studying 297 poorly performing first graders. He found a 6-9 fold increase of OSA. After the affected children were treated, their school performance improved. When treating OSA in children, removal of the tonsils and adenoids frequently provides the needed open airway.

To reduce the risk of OSA, Shiroh Isono, M.D. suggests that orthodontic treatment be started at a younger age. The goal is to guide jaw growth to allow for more tongue room and thus a larger airway. He said any treatment that might decrease jaw size should be avoided. It will crowd the tongue and increase the risk for OSA.

Wearing an oral appliance while sleeping is the most common form of treatment for adults with mild to moderate OSA. The appliance supports the lower jaw in a more forward position, bringing the tongue forward to open the airway. The appliance can be fitted by a dentist educated in sleep medicine. An increasing number of medical insurance companies are providing coverage for oral appliances when claims are submitted.

For more advanced cases, the positive airway pressure machine (PAP) is used. The PAP machine is an air pump attached to a mask worn over the nose during sleep. The air pumped into the nose is usually very effective in keeping the airway open during sleep. The oral appliance can be used in addition to the PAP when necessary.

In unusual adult cases, surgery may be needed to remove an obstruction in the nose to enhance airflow. Surgery to move the upper and lower jaws forward has shown excellent results. This is advanced surgery and is limited to carefully selected patients. Surgery in the throat area has shown very limited long term success.

Weight loss is an important part of the treatment since fat in the walls of the throat can narrow the airway making other treatment methods less effective.

OSA has been shown to produce a wide range of serious health problems including heart disease and even death. If you or your child snore, you need to receive successful treatment. Your health depends on it.

Dr. William P. Smith, Jr.'s practice is limited to the treatment of snoring, sleep apnea, and TMD. He can be reached at 928-282-2077 for additional information. He has treated sleep disorders for over 20 years. He is a licensed general dentist in Arizona and Oklahoma. His office is located at 1785 W. Hwy 89A Suite 3G in West Sedona.

The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine is the only professional association that represents dental and medical practitioners treating sleep disordered breathing through the use of oral appliance therapy and oral surgery. The Academy fosters relationships with the medical community to further sleep disorders research and treatment. The Annual Meeting is the single largest world wide gathering of dental professionals involved in the treatment of sleep-disordered breathing.