

# Excellence in Sleep Treatment

## Wake up and Sleep

By Matthew Bellotti

It is the new epidemic, a complaint echoing in hospitals and clinics around the country. Doctors are hearing more medical concerns relating to sleep than ever before. Ailments from back complaints to diabetes, Alzheimer's to high blood pressure are medically shown to worsen with insufficient sleep.

Insomnia also ruins careers and causes relationships to breakdown, especially for parents introduced to the unpredictable sleep patterns of babies. Hundreds of millions are spent on pills, holistic treatment and medical cures by the bleary-eyed and desperate.

Dr Michael Weinstein is the Director of Winthrop University Hospital's Sleep Center. He feels that "sleep disorders are extremely prevalent and under-diagnosed and under-recognized by physicians" with more than 12 million Americans suffering from sleep apnea often without being aware of their plight.

Sleep apnea is the disruption of breathing during sleep. The body does not inhale or exhale for short periods, sometimes a minute at a time. The most common form is Obstructive Sleep Disorder, which occurs when the soft tissue in the throat collapses. Other forms include Central Sleep Apnea and Complex Apnea. All are dangerous and directly lead to

high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, weight gain, brain disfunction, impotency and headaches. If left untreated it can even be fatal.

Dr Weinstein treats people whose lives are being destroyed by poor quality sleep, frequent waking in the night (nocturia), and a general sense of exhaustion. They come to him to be monitored, examined and treated according to the severity of their diagnosis. He may use an appliance to keep the throat open or advise surgery, either route displaying excellent results. "The key is to identify the cause of the insomnia. They get a sleep study if we suspect an intrinsic sleep disorder like apnea or severe snoring or limb movement."

Neal Seltzer, DMD, D, ABDSM and Jeffrey S. Rein, DDS, D, ABDSM, in their dental practice in Williston Park, NY, have been treating obstructive sleep apnea and snoring with oral appliances since 1991. They are two of the few dentists who are Diplomates of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine. "We work in conjunction with physicians," explains Dr Seltzer. "Dentists are not licensed to diagnose sleep disorders. I work as a team member."

Dentistry has offered significant insight and practical support to sufferers of sleep disordered breathing. Techniques such as Oral Appliance Therapy can, according to Dr Rein, "often work well for severe cases, when patients cannot tolerate CPAP (Continuous Positive

Airway Pressure)." Both Drs. Rein and Seltzer caution against over-the-counter appliances mass-marketed to the public. Each individual has a different pattern of sleep and reasons for their apnea, hence treatment must be tailored to the individual and be properly assessed by qualified practitioners. Appliances custom-made by a qualified Dentists, which are approved by the FDA, provide a safer, more comfortable solution with reliable success rates. Dr Seltzer also points out that "more and more health insurance companies are covering oral appliance therapy as more people realize its efficacy."

It's no coincidence that the coffee bean is now the second most traded commodity (after oil). We're all after a short-term fix like coffee or drugs like benzodiazepines but severe sleep apnea stems from more serious, underlying issues.

According to renowned expert in the field of sleep, Dr Qanta Ahmad, MD, most Americans never reach the amount of sleep they need and are "constantly forced to operate on severely sleep-deprived schedules." Working long days and late night television leads to little or no non-dream sleep, which affects CNS development, memory formation and heightened pain insensitivity. Perhaps most disturbingly, she also points out that fewer than six per cent of sufferers will seek professional help, indicating it might be time to wake up and address our sleeping problems.

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