

Sleep Apnea Screening for Dentists – Political Means and Practical Performance

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Objectives:

95 % of patients with sleep apnea go undiagnosed. There is a need to involve additional specialties into the diagnostic process. Here we see a new role of dentists. Trained sleep disorders dentists, e.g. members of the national Dental Sleep Medicine Academies (American, European, German, Japanese, British associations are existing) , can use innovative easy screening monitors to screen their normal dental patients and identify those suffering from sleep-related breathing disorders.

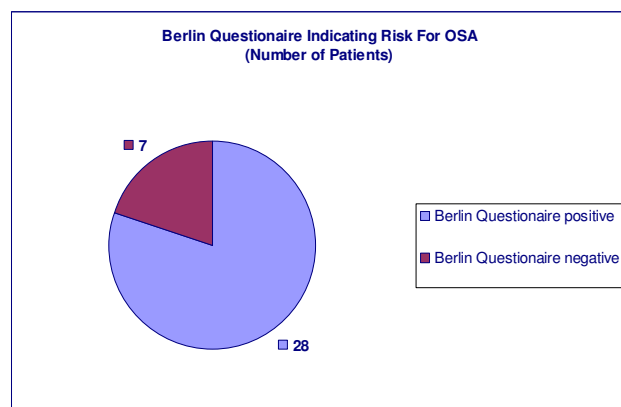
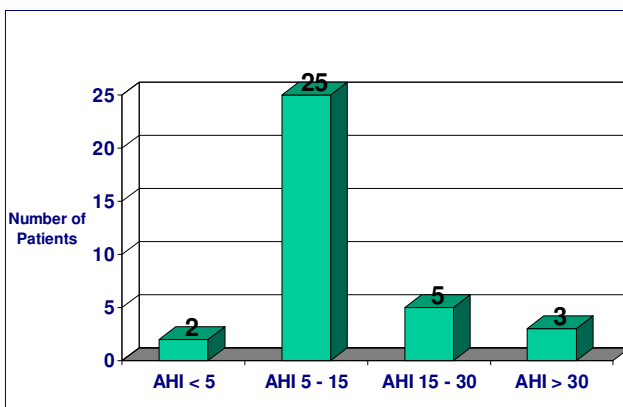
Methods:

Based on a patient history with snoring and excessive daytime sleepiness in the dental examination we used the screening device Apnea Link in a dental office in 35 patients (28m, 7 f, mean age 42.7yrs) to receive a pretest probability for the risk of OSA.

This minimal one channel screening device collects the respiratory information by means of nasal cannula with a highly sensitive pressure sensor. Automatic analysis of apneas, hypopneas, flow limitations and snoring present a pretest probability for the risk of OSA based on an RDI > 5.

Results:

33 out of 35 screened patients had a risk for OSA (RDI > 5). They were referred to sleep specialists and underwent portable home monitoring and/or PSG for further diagnostic procedure. In all patients mild to severe sleep disordered breathing could be confirmed. Treatment was initiated either with mandibular advancement device or with CPAP.



Conclusion:

Sleep disorders dentists see as many patients as general practitioners. Additionally they see young adults on a regular base who do not often see their GP. These dentists have the unique chance to diagnose patients with SDB and refer them for polysomnography.

Dentists trained in sleep medicine play an increasing role in the diagnosis of sleep-related breathing disorders.