

GUEST COMMENTARY



A small stimulator implanted under the skin activates the system, an alternative to CPAP for treating sleep apnea. (Abrazo Health)

Good night's sleep can help prevent heart disease

By Abrazo Health

A good night's sleep plays a critical role in heart health, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association. How critical? The study's authors recommended sleep should be given equal priority with diet, exercise and other factors for preventing cardiovascular disease.

National Sleep Awareness Week is March 12-18, when outreach efforts help educate the public about the dangers of disrupted sleep.

The new study reinforced findings that lack of restful sleep and obstructive sleep apnea are associated with poor cardiovascular health.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a strong risk

factor for high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, heart failure and stroke-causing arrhythmias. Effective treatment of sleep apnea may reduce the risk of major cardiac events and reduce the incidence and recurrence of atrial fibrillation, noted an analysis published by the American College of Cardiology.

Common signs of

sleep apnea can include frequent loud snoring and gasping for air during sleep. Excess body weight is present in more than 60 percent of the patients referred for a diagnostic sleep evaluation.

An estimated 26 percent of adults age 30-70 have sleep apnea. Several treatment options exist including Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP). A procedure now offered at Abrazo Arrowhead Campus provides an alternative to the masks and hoses of CPAP machines.

The Inspire Upper Airway Stimulation



Dr. Richard Pearlstein

system is a pace-maker-size device that works from inside the body and with the patient's natural breathing process. It delivers mild stimulation to key airway muscles to keep the airway open during sleep.

"Many with sleep apnea don't even know they have a problem. Obstructive sleep apnea

• See **Abrazo** on page 7

Abrazo

• From page 6

can be a potentially life-threatening condition,” said Dr. Richard Pearlstein, an otolaryngologist on the medical staff at Abrazo Arrowhead Campus.

For example, heart disease and obstructive sleep apnea can be a killer combination. Sleep apnea treatment may help control blood pressure, reduce the risk of major cardiac events, and reduce incidence and recurrence of atrial fibrillation.

While CPAP is often successful, studies show that many users eventually stop using it. Inspire provides an alternative for those who do not

want or cannot tolerate wearing a CPAP.

The Inspire system includes a small nerve stimulator implanted under the skin similar to a pacemaker. Users can turn it on or off with a handheld remote control.

Inspire is a significant advance in sleep apnea treatment. It helps reduce sleep apnea events and importantly, has a high level of patient satisfaction and therapy adherence, said Dr. Pearlstein.

A recent study said sleep disorders account for nearly \$95 billion annually in health care utilization and costs in the U.S. Poor sleep also causes fatigue leading to poor job performance and increased risk for

traffic and work-related accidents.

Common symptoms of sleep apnea:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness and fatigue.
- Dry mouth or headaches when waking.
- Sexual dysfunction or decreased libido.
- Waking up often during the night to urinate.
- Decreases in neuro-cognitive skills.

Sleep apnea symptoms may be different for women compared with men.

Women who have sleep apnea more often report headache, fatigue, depression, anxiety, insomnia and sleep disruption.

For more information about Abrazo Health hospitals, take a free heart health risk assessment or to find a doctor, visit AbrazoHealth.com.