

CPAP or Oral Appliance Therapy...which one is better and cheaper?

With March being “Sleep Awareness Month,” a recent article could help shed some light on the advantages and disadvantages of sleep apnea treatment options. A big misnomer is that a CPAP machine is the ONLY option for a patient suffering from obstructive sleep apnea. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Although, CPAP is the best option for severe sleep apnea, many studies show that a properly made sleep appliance is more effective and a better approach for patients with mild or moderate sleep apnea. Unfortunately, awareness of these facts are not as prevalent as it should be and when people fail with CPAP therapy due to discomfort, claustrophobia, or lifestyle, they believe there are no other options for treatment. In addition, many physicians and insurance companies will only recommend CPAP therapy as the primary approach. Although the overall success and compliance of the patient should also be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, a recent analysis published in “Sleep Review,” shows the cost of CPAP therapy actually being higher than oral appliance therapy.

Even as oral appliance therapy (OAT) gains traction among sleep specialists as a superior alternative to CPAP for patients with mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), cost concerns remain a roadblock for many patients. A large part of this is because, like so much in life, pricing isn’t transparent. Total costs of OSA treatment with both CPAP and OAT can vary based on the exact devices used.

Costs Over Time

Beyond daily costs, the Sleep Review analysis also looked at what happened over five years, the typical replacement timeline for dental sleep appliances. CPAP initially looks more affordable over the first three months of treatment. At four months, however, total costs of CPAP and OAT are simi-

lar. After this point, there are no additional costs for a dental sleep appliance, yet CPAP therapy costs continue to rise as various components require replacement. According to the analysis, by the end of five years, CPAP costs about two to three times more than OAT.

Costs of Noncompliance

The inconsistency between costs for CPAP and OAT are historical and well known, says Gregory Olk, MBA, director of marketing in North America for oral appliance maker SomnoMed. But there’s one factor missing from the analysis that could dramatically skew the relative costs, Olk says. This crucial missing element is the wild card that is patient behavior.

“Any therapy is especially costly when it isn’t working,” Olk says. “While the costs of not being treated for any disease state may be difficult to quantify, the result of avoiding effective OSA treatment can be devastating to

the patient and the patient’s family.” While there are obvious negative health and financial consequences of untreated obstructive sleep apnea that may be easy for sleep physicians and their patients to grasp, it can be harder for patients to anticipate the surprise bills that may come with CPAP, but not OAT, Kryger says. CPAP machines collect and transmit data to clinicians on the frequency and duration of use. With OAT, clinicians rely on patients or their partners to self-report utilization data. “If the patient is not compliant, [CPAP] won’t be covered any longer and the machine will be taken away,” Kryger says, which is not the case for OAT.

Studies have illustrated that patients are much more likely to adhere to oral appliance therapy than CPAP, says Anthony Dioguardi, DMD, who practices general dentistry and dental sleep medicine at Downtown New Haven Dental in Connecticut and who wasn’t involved in the study. Dental sleep appliances have a



Dentally Speaking

by Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

90% compliance rate, while CPAP therapy has only a 30% compliance rate with patients.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a medical condition that has serious adverse effects on the body including high blood pressure, increased chance for heart at-

tacks and strokes, diabetes and even death. Whatever way a patient chooses to treat their OSA it needs to be predictable, effective, and easy to use. Cost seems to be a factor in any type of treatment, however, weighing all options for your health is most important in the end.

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RH Museum at Van Hoosen Farm reopens *Continued from page 12*

welcoming you to our nationally registered historic site. Take a self-guided tour of the bottom level of our newly built Equipment Barn, as well as our Bull Barn and Milk House for more exhibits that depict life as it once was in Historic Stony Creek Village.

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seum or call 248-656-4663 for more information and upcoming programs on site.

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