



Mr Michael Oko, ENT Consultant and Alex Affifi, ULHT Management Team

Lincolnshire

The Snoring Disorders/Sleep Apnoea Centre

Summary

An innovative Snoring/Sleep Apnoea Service led by consultant Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) surgeons at United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust that provides accurate and prompt diagnosis of the causes of snoring/sleep apnoea and the most appropriate treatment.

The Problem

Prior to April 2006 there was no Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) service across Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire has a population catchment of around 700,000 people and an estimated incidence of OSA of 1-4% of the population. The condition mainly affects male patients, who are three times more likely to suffer than females. Patients were previously referred to Nottingham, Leicester or Cambridge.

The Solution

The consultant initially carries out a full ENT examination including a flexible endoscopic examination of the airway using a structured form. Decisions around further investigation are made at this stage, to determine what medical management needs to take place or if surgical intervention is required.

For 80% of patients, medical management is the most appropriate route and advice on weight loss/lifestyle changes, prescribing of mandibular advancement devices or Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) are available options. Patients on CPAP are issued an auto-titrating machine with smartcard technology so that compliance, pressure setting and mask leakages are tracked on an on-line server. This reduces outpatient appointments and has shown a reduction in sleepiness and an improvement in the quality of life.

Surgical intervention is applicable to 20% of cases and patients are admitted overnight, reviewed and the appropriate treatment regime is then followed. Although obstructive sleep apnoea

affects up to 4% of the population and is associated with obesity, local public awareness has been low and patients were not proactively coming forward for treatment. Briefings were provided to local patients and GP's to help identify patients with the condition, so they could be referred to the service.

Benefits to Patients

The service offers a high quality, tailored service providing morning, afternoon and evening clinics to patients (80% of sleep studies are carried out in the comfort of the patient's own home). The clinics are predominantly in the evenings within four weeks of referral, so individuals do not have to take time off work.

Patients are also offered Direct Visualisation of the airway with video play back for education and reassurance in a pathology defined as 'upper airway obstruction'. Those on CPAP have a free phone helpline for telephone support. The Smartcard technology allows the consultant to monitor patient compliance on CPAP via a secure web-server ensuring prompt intervention and reduces unnecessary trips to hospital. All machines are couriered to patients' homes (including humidification devices and any additional masks). Servicing/repairs are done from home reducing the need to see the consultant to just once a year after stabilisation on CPAP therapy.

In the last year, car accident fatalities in Lincolnshire fell by 28, which is a significant saving to the county's rescue teams, in economic terms and in life terms. A contributory factor may be that the service has treated over 700 patients with sleep apnoea and these people are now able to drive more safely, rather than being in fear of falling asleep at the wheel.

“Don't lose faith in your idea even when some say “it will never work””

Contact this innovator:

Mr Michael Oko - Michael.Oko@ULH.nhs.uk

www.snoringdisorderscentre.com