

Homecare Classroom on Sleep Apnea

ISSUE 19

Sleep Apnea Associated with Higher Mortality from Cancer

Sleep-disordered breathing (SDB), commonly known as sleep apnea, is associated with an increased risk of cancer mortality, according to a new study.

While previous studies have associated SDB with increased risks of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, depression, and early death, this is the first human study to link apnea with higher rate of cancer mortality.

Lead author Dr. F. Javier Nieto, chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, says the study showed a nearly five times higher incidence of cancer deaths in patients with severe SDB compared to those without the disorder, a result that echoes previous findings in animal studies.

"Clearly, there is a correlation, and we are a long way from proving that sleep apnea causes cancer or contributes to its growth," says Nieto, an expert in sleep epidemiology. "But animal studies have shown that the intermittent hypoxia (an inadequate supply of oxygen) that characterizes sleep apnea promotes angiogenesis-increased vascular growth - and tumor growth. Our results suggest that SDB is also associated with an increased risk of cancer mortality in humans."

The Wisconsin researchers examined 22-year mortality data on 1,522 subjects from the Wisconsin Sleep Cohort. This cohort is a longitudinal, community-based epidemiology study of sleep apnea and other sleep problems that began in 1989 under the leadership of Dr. Terry Young, also a member of the UW population health sciences faculty. The cohort began was a random sample of Wisconsin state employees.

The participants undergo overnight sleep studies that include polysomnography - an all-night recording of sleep and breathing - and many other tests at four-year intervals.

People with severe sleep-disordered breathing died of cancer at a rate 4.8 times higher than people with no sleep breathing problems. These associations were similar after excluding the 126 subjects who had used continuous positive airway pressure and were stronger among non-obese subjects than obese subjects.

"In our large population-based sample, SDB was associated with an elevated risk of cancer mortality," concluded Dr. Nieto. "Additional studies are needed to replicate these results. If the relationship between SDB and cancer mortality is validated in further studies, the diagnosis and treatment of SDB in patients with cancer might be indicated to prolong survival."

REF: Members of the Wisconsin team include Dr. Paul Peppard, the principal investigator of the Wisconsin Sleep Cohort, Dr. Terry Young, Laurel Finn and Dr. K. Mae Hla.

Seminar of the month – How Chinese Medicine helps Sleep Apnea?

Guest Speaker : Dr. Chan Fong Yeung

- Registered Practitioner of Chinese Medicine
- Master in Medicine, The School of Chinese Medicine, Hong Kong Baptist University
- MD, Chinese Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Permanent Honorary President, Hong Kong and Kowloon Chinese Herbalists Association
- Lecturer of Registered Chinese Medicine Practitioner training, Hong Kong and Kowloon Chinese Herbalists Association

Date : 18 November 2012

Time : 13:00-15:00

(Snacks and drinks will be served at 12:00)

Venue : The HomeCare Medical Ltd.

1/F, International Industrial Building,
501-503 Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok,
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