

Daytime Fatigue Linked To Snoring



Dr. Peretz Lavie at the Technion's Sleep Laboratory: His research links Snoring Disease to daytime fatigue, accidents in the work place, and hypertension.

NEW YORK, NY — Daytime drowsiness has been blamed on depression, lack of vitamins, and poor circulation but the culprit — says Dr. Peretz Lavie of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology — might be your nose.

Dr. Lavie is the director of the Diagnostic Sleep Laboratory at the Technion's Faculty of Medicine

and is among the first to identify and document the nose as a "sleep organ". In some patients, he says, an obstructed nose may trigger one of the most pervasive sleep disorders, sleep apnea, a nighttime breathing disorder which can cause excessive daytime sleepiness.

Sleep apnea, or "Snoring Disease" effects approximately two million people in the United States. It has eluded medical analysis because, until recently, physicians diagnosing sleep disorders had to rely on their patient's subjective complaints instead of monitoring their vital functions during sleep. In the case of sleep apnea, the patient's air passages are momentarily blocked forcing the sufferer to reawake in order to resume breathing. This may occur hundreds of times during the night. Dr. Lavie has recorded patients waking up and falling asleep as often as 600 times during a single night, and most have no awareness of their repetitive suffocation.

"They don't know it," says Dr. Lavie, "but these patients actually haven't slept at all." When Snoring Disease is identified, breathing can be eased either by use of medication or surgery. And since most sufferers of the disease are overweight, Dr. Lavie recommends that a patient simply go on a diet and lose the excess weight which is also a cause of nighttime breathing problems.

Dr. Lavie's research has linked the consequences of poor quality sleep to daytime moodiness, accidents in the work place, and even to hypertension. In a report to be published this summer in the American Heart Journal, Dr. Lavie reports that 20 percent of patients with hypertension, which cannot be linked to direct medical causes such as diabetes, also suffer from sleep apnea. And in another study, Lavie found that patients complaining of excessive daytime sleepiness also had significantly more work accidents — particularly multiple accidents — as well as more sick days per accident than their well-rested counterparts.

"Almost all sufferers from Snoring Disease exhibit a very low quality of life. They get no satisfaction from their jobs and often want to change their jobs," says Lavie. His study concludes by recommending that industrial physicians be made more aware of sleep disorders in order to reduce worker accident rate.

Historically, insomnia was considered as the primary sleeping disorder since it could be easily articulated by the patient and diagnosed by the physician. But Dr. Lavie predicts that as the pervasiveness and impact of sleep apnea becomes more well known, the emphasis on sleep research will change focus from studying people who can't fall asleep to people who can't stay awake.



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