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Why is dentistry in a unique position to screen and treat patients with a sleep breathing disorder?

The dentist's role in helping patients who snore or suffer from sleep apnea continues to become increasingly important. Medical problems associated with sleep-disordered breathing (SDB) have been well studied and documented, and continue to expand. From hypertension to impaired cognitive functioning and diabetes, the dentist's role in dental sleep medicine (DSM) can help prevent advanced health consequences. Untreated sleep apnea patients put themselves at an increased risk of morbidity and mortality. We need to step up and educate our patients so they know there is a solution out there for a better night's sleep and overall health care. While public awareness has improved, many still continue to go undiagnosed. So, we know that untreated sleep apnea can lead to complications in a patient's health, but why should dentists get involved in DSM? CPAP machines have often been the top treatment option for patients suffering from sleep apnea but that is changing at a rapid pace. Many patients who are unwilling or unable to use CPAP machines have benefitted from using oral appliance therapy, which is provided by dentists in the field of dental sleep medicine. Oral appliances are recommended by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine in the treatment of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), as one of the leading treatment options. By seeking advanced education in the area of DSM, dentists can learn how to spot patients with OSA, as well as providing patients who are CPAP non-compliant with proper treatment through oral appliances. With so many options available for oral appliance therapy, dentists need to remain at the cutting edge of the latest advancements in dental sleep medicine. Dentists who get involved in oral appliance therapy for the treatment of OSA are often surprised at how grateful their patients become after only a few nights of uninterrupted sleep. The availability of oral appliance therapy and dental sleep medicine opens up doors for the dental field, so we can continue to provide our patients with the best care possible.

Biography

Mayoor Patel has received his Dental degree from the University of Tennessee in 1994. After graduation, he completed a one-year Residency in Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD). In 2011, he has completed Master's in Science from Tufts University in the area of Craniofacial Pain and Dental Sleep Medicine. Besides being a Diplomat in the American Board of Sleep Medicine he is the 2nd Dentist that has fulfilled the necessary requirements and is a registered Polysomnographic Technologist. Presently, he serves as a Board Member with American Academy of Craniofacial Pain. Since 2003, he has limited his practice to the treatment of TMJ disorders, headaches, facial pain and sleep apnea. His additional contributions include textbook chapters' publication, consumer book on treatment options for sleep apnea and various professional and consumer articles.

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