

British Lung Foundation Calls for Better Access to Sleep Apnoea Clinics



A new 10-point charter outlining the diagnosis and treatment that people living with obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) should have access to has been launched today by the British Lung Foundation.

The BLF's OSA charter also calls for improved screening, and more comprehensive and consistent access to sleep clinic diagnosis and appropriate treatment throughout the UK. The charter also calls on

governments across the UK to make OSA a national priority. This reflects the need to improve the current levels of awareness of the symptoms and dangers of untreated OSA across a broad range of people, from the public through to healthcare professionals.

Chris Mulholland, head of the British Lung Foundation Wales, said: "The BLF's OSA charter reflects the need for earlier diagnosis, better access to treatment and increased awareness – both among the wider public and medical community.

"The range of health and lifestyle impacts of OSA mean these recommendations not only have the potential to save lives, but to make considerable savings to the NHS at a time of great financial pressure."

Dr Keir Lewis, respiratory consultant at Hywel Dda Health Board, and an expert in obstructive sleep apnoea, said: "Sleep apnoea can take a huge toll on an individual's

Snore Centre clinic



health and wellbeing. Those with undiagnosed sleep apnoea are very extensive hospital users before they are diagnosed, and visit hospitals and their GPs less when they are on the correct treatment.

"Moreover, undiagnosed people are at between four and seven times greater risk of having road traffic accidents than the rest of the population. And yet it really can be completely treated. For some patients it may simply be changes to lifestyle, for others it may be using a machine to help them breathe at night."

New Harley Street Clinic Now Open!

Michael Oko has established a Sleeping Disorders Centre clinic at London's most respected medical address to cater for private patients in need of diagnosis and treatment for sleep apnoea and other sleep disorders

Clinics on Fridays and Saturdays

Call 0203 0753 150 to arrange an appointment

Or book online at: www.150harleyst.com/michael-oko

ENT at 150, 150 Harley Street, London W1G 7LQ



Does Sleep Apnoea Worsen in Winter?

Seasonal changes in weight and allergies can affect sleep apnea, and Brazilian researchers, led by Cristiane Maria Cassol at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, wanted to see if weather changes might also have any impact on the disorder.

They used data from patients who came in for testing at a sleep clinic on how many times their sleep was disturbed by breaks in breathing. The study included one night of sleep for more than 7,500 patients over a 10-year period. The researchers then compared the severity of the patients' apnea to the weather conditions at the time, including humidity, temperature and air pollution.

Patients who came in during the colder months had more nighttime breaks in breathing than those who sought treatment during the warmer months. During the winter, patients stopped breathing an average of 18 times per hour, compared to 15 times an hour in the summer. Similarly, the sleep clinic was more likely to see the most severe cases – people who stopped breathing more than 30 times an hour – in the colder months.



The British Lung Foundation... Believes that people with OSA and their families have a right to:

1. OSA screening, through primary care wherever possible;
2. a speedy and accurate diagnosis in a sleep clinic, wherever they live in the UK;
3. access to appropriate treatment and to a comprehensive specialist sleep service if needed, wherever they live in the UK;
4. appropriate information and ongoing support for the management of the condition, according to agreed national standards and provided by suitably qualified and trained staff; and
5. timely and relevant information on the implications of an OSA diagnosis for vigilance-critical job roles, and fast-tracking for diagnosis and treatment if people with OSA drive for a living.

Calls on governments across the UK to:

6. make OSA a national priority;
7. increase awareness of the symptoms and dangers of, and issues that surround, OSA among medical professionals, employers, the general public and those at greatest risk;
8. ensure collection of comprehensive data to enable commissioners and service planners to provide effective services; and
9. encourage investment in research, including clinical trials, recognising the potential cost savings and improvements to quality of life that could be made.

And encourages employers to:

10. arrange for all staff who are employed as drivers or in other vigilance-critical roles to be screened for OSA.

About 34 percent of patients who came in during cold weather had severe apnea, while 28 percent of patients during warm weather had severe apnea. The team found that certain weather conditions – high atmospheric pressure and humidity and high levels of the air pollutant carbon monoxide – were tied to worse cases of apnea.

But the study could not determine whether it's the weather that's responsible for the more severe

sleep apneas. The researchers write in their report, published in the journal *Chest*, that more severe apnea in the winter "can be due to several circumstances, including winter-related upper-airway problems that intensify the severity of (sleep apnea) symptoms."

Another possibility is that wood burning to heat homes during the winter can cause irritation in the airways and aggravate sleep apnea.