



Contact: Ms. Katrina Leftheris  
Media and Public Relations  
Vantage Healthcare Network, Inc.®  
(814) 337-0000 x 2300

## For Immediate Release

### Untreated Sleep Apnea Tied to Serious Health Risks

Obstructive sleep apnea is associated with an increased risk of stroke in middle-aged and older adults, especially men, according to new results from a landmark study supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health. Overall, sleep apnea more than doubles the risk of stroke in men. Obstructive sleep apnea is a common disorder in which the upper airway is intermittently narrowed or blocked, disrupting sleep and breathing during sleep.

The Yale Center for Sleep Medicine found that obstructive sleep apnea significantly increased the risk of stroke or death through an observation of more than 1,000 patients over the age of 50. None of the participants had a history of heart attack or stroke at the start of the study and they were studied for just under 3.5 years. [<http://www.nih.gov/news/health/apr2010/nhlbi-08.htm>]

There are three distinct forms of sleep apnea: central, obstructive, and complex constituting 0.4%, 84% and 15% of cases respectively. Breathing is interrupted by the *lack of respiratory effort* in central sleep apnea; in obstructive sleep apnea, breathing is interrupted by a physical block to airflow *despite respiratory effort*. In complex (or "mixed") sleep apnea, there is a transition from central to obstructive features during the events themselves. [<http://en.wikipedia.org/>]

New results support earlier findings that have linked sleep apnea to stroke risk. Sleep Heart Health Study researchers have also reported that untreated sleep apnea is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, irregular heartbeats, heart failure, and death from any cause. Other studies have also linked untreated sleep apnea with overweight and obesity and diabetes. It is also linked to excessive daytime sleepiness, which lowers performance in the workplace and at school, and increases the risk of injuries and death from drowsy driving and other accidents.

More than 12 million American adults are believed to have sleep apnea, and most are not diagnosed or treated. Treatments to restore regular breathing during sleep include mouthpieces, surgery, and breathing devices, such as continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP. In people who are overweight or obese, weight loss can also help.

These treatments can help improve breathing and reduce the severity of symptoms such as loud snoring and excessive daytime sleepiness, thereby improving sleep-related quality of life and performance at work or in school. Additional randomized clinical trials by the National Institute of Health (NIH) to test whether treating sleep apnea lowers the risk of stroke, other cardiovascular diseases, or death are needed.

**Vantage**®  
Customizing Healthcare Solutions for You  
###