

# Physician Experience With Obstructive Sleep Apnea: The Most Commonly Missed

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is a common sleep disorder characterized by repeated episodes of upper airway collapse during sleep, leading to pauses in breathing. It is estimated to affect 1 in 5 adults in the United States, and yet it remains underdiagnosed and undertreated. This is largely due to the fact that OSA can be difficult to recognize, as it often presents with subtle symptoms that can be easily overlooked or attributed to other conditions.



## Life After CPAP: A Physician's Experience with Obstructive Sleep Apnea, the Most Commonly Missed Common Diagnosis in the U.S. by Chris Lehto

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 476 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 65 pages
Lending	: Enabled



Physicians play a crucial role in diagnosing and managing OSA. However, many physicians lack the knowledge and experience necessary to effectively care for patients with this condition. This article will provide an overview of OSA, including its symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. We will

also discuss the challenges that physicians face in diagnosing and managing OSA, and we will provide some tips for improving physician awareness and care.

## **Symptoms of OSA**

The most common symptoms of OSA include:

- Loud snoring
- Waking up gasping or choking
- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Fatigue
- Morning headaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Weight gain

It is important to note that not all people with OSA experience all of these symptoms. Some people may only have a few mild symptoms, while others may have more severe symptoms that significantly impact their daily lives.

## **Diagnosis of OSA**

The diagnosis of OSA is based on a combination of the patient's symptoms, a physical examination, and a sleep study. A sleep study is a test that records the patient's breathing, heart rate, and other physiological parameters during sleep. The results of the sleep study can help to

determine whether the patient has OSA and, if so, the severity of the condition.

There are two main types of sleep studies: polysomnography and home sleep apnea testing. Polysomnography is the gold standard for diagnosing OSA, but it is more expensive and time-consuming than home sleep apnea testing. Home sleep apnea testing is a less expensive and more convenient option, but it is not as accurate as polysomnography.

## **Treatment of OSA**

The treatment of OSA depends on the severity of the condition. For mild OSA, lifestyle changes, such as losing weight and avoiding alcohol and sedatives before bed, may be enough to improve symptoms. For moderate to severe OSA, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy is the most effective treatment. CPAP therapy involves wearing a mask over the nose and mouth during sleep. The mask delivers pressurized air, which helps to keep the airway open.

Other treatment options for OSA include oral appliances, surgery, and hypoglossal nerve stimulation. Oral appliances are devices that fit in the mouth and help to keep the airway open. Surgery can be used to remove or reposition tissues that are blocking the airway. Hypoglossal nerve stimulation is a newer treatment option that involves implanting a device that stimulates the hypoglossal nerve, which controls the muscles of the tongue and airway.

## **Challenges in Diagnosing and Managing OSA**

Physicians face a number of challenges in diagnosing and managing OSA. These challenges include:

- **Lack of awareness:** Many physicians are not aware of the prevalence and symptoms of OSA. This can lead to OSA being overlooked or misdiagnosed.
- **Lack of training:** Most physicians receive little or no training in the diagnosis and management of OSA. This can lead to physicians feeling uncomfortable or unsure about how to care for patients with OSA.
- **Difficulty diagnosing OSA:** OSA can be difficult to diagnose because it often presents with subtle symptoms that can be easily overlooked or attributed to other conditions.
- **Lack of access to sleep studies:** Sleep studies can be expensive and time-consuming, and they are not always readily available. This can make it difficult for physicians to diagnose OSA in patients who cannot afford or access a sleep study.

### **Tips for Improving Physician Awareness and Care**

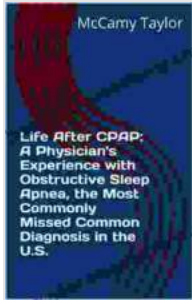
There are a number of things that can be done to improve physician awareness and care of OSA. These include:

- **Education:** Physicians should be educated about the prevalence, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of OSA. This can be done through continuing medical education courses, workshops, and conferences.

- **Training:** Physicians should receive training in the diagnosis and management of OSA. This training can be provided by sleep specialists or other healthcare professionals who have experience in OSA care.
- **Access to sleep studies:** Physicians should have access to sleep studies so that they can diagnose OSA in patients who cannot afford or access a sleep study. This can be done through partnerships with sleep centers or other healthcare providers who offer sleep studies.
- **Patient education:** Patients should be educated about the importance of OSA diagnosis and treatment. This can be done through public awareness campaigns, patient support groups, and other educational programs.

By improving physician awareness and care of OSA, we can help to improve the lives of the millions of people who suffer from this condition.

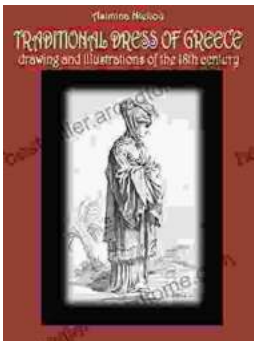
OSA is a common and serious sleep disorder that can have a significant impact on the health and quality of life. Early diagnosis and treatment of OSA is essential to prevent complications such as heart disease, stroke, and death. Physicians play a crucial role in diagnosing and managing OSA, but many physicians lack the knowledge and experience necessary to effectively care for patients with this condition. This article has provided an overview of OSA, including its symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. We have also discussed the challenges that physicians face in diagnosing and managing OSA, and we have provided some tips for improving physician awareness and care. By working together, physicians and patients can help to improve the lives of the millions of people who suffer from OSA.



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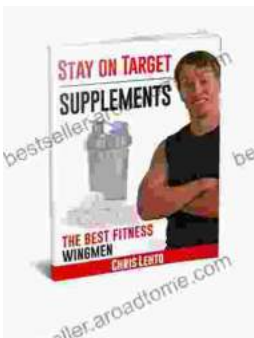
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