

Gunnerson Dental

DENTISTRY

K. Cheyn Gunnerson, D.M.D., P.C. • 33 W. 300 S., Payson
(801) 658-0105 • excellencebychoice.netGUNNERSON *G* DENTAL

THE DENTIST'S ROLE IN CHRONIC PAIN AND SLEEP APNEA

Dentists specializing in sleep and TMD are key components in screening and treatment of chronic pain and sleep apnea



For years, neurologists and pain management specialists have treated pain in the head and neck as separate issues. Similarly, sleep specialists in psychology, pulmonology and psychiatry have treated sleep disorders as separate issues.

Dentists have also treated jaw joint disorders as mechanical problems separate from the rest of the body.

Over the last decade, research has changed the way professionals think about treating these issues and the correlation they have between specialists and the dental field. Research shows that the worst primary headaches such as cluster headache (sufferers primarily male) and chronic paroxysmal hemicrania (one sided headaches that occur in bunches, sufferers primarily females) are the result of disturbances in REM sleep. The typical treatment for such disorders is prescribing medications as calcium channel blockers, tricyclic antidepressants, selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, etc.

Ninety percent of sleep disordered breathing is undiagnosed and that craniofacial pain (headache and facial pain/

TMD) and sleep disordered breathing are intimately related and should be addressed together.

The problem is the lack of communication between and training for these disorders by physicians and dentists. Patients typically go undiagnosed until there are symptoms such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke or oral manifestations such as bruxism with facial pain, headaches and joint disorders. Even those patients who have been diagnosed with apnea rarely have an examination of the nasal and oropharyngeal structures. They are simply prescribed a CPAP.

At Gunnerson Dental, patients are screened for sleep and TMD disorders and work directly with physicians and specialists in order to determine the best course of treatment for our patients. Dr. Cheyn Gunnerson's goal is to relieve discomfort and pain throughout the body as well as aid in the management of other conditions which are worsened due to lack of sleep.

Many dentists don't have the training necessary to screen for these issues and, in most cases, will prescribe a night guard to

address a patient's symptoms. It has been found that 40 percent of the time, a night-guard will make a person with apnea and sleep issues 50 percent worse.

Working with a dentist trained in the treatment of TMD and sleep, like Dr. Gunnerson, along with physicians specializing in pain and sleep allows the comprehensive care and treatment of patients who suffer from chronic pain.

Gunnerson Dental's goal is to give patients back the quality of life they deserve.

Contributing articles and information from Steven R. Olmos, DDS and TMJ Sleep Therapy Center International

Medical Tip

Discuss any and all teeth and jaw issues with your dentist at your regular check-up. Dentists are specialized medical professionals and work with other specialists to find long-lasting solutions to chronic pain.