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Study finds high rates of sleep apnea in women

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New research has found high rates of sleep apnoea in women, despite the condition usually being regarded as a disorder predominantly of males.

The study, published online (16 August 2012) ahead of print today in the *European Respiratory Journal*, also suggested that women with hypertension and/or obesity were more likely to experience sleep apnoea.

Obstructive sleep apnoea is a condition in which there are frequent pauses in breathing during sleep. The incidence of the condition increases with age and it is considered more prevalent in men than in women. In this new study, researchers from Uppsala and Umeå University in Sweden aimed to investigate the frequency and risk factors of sleep apnoea in women.

The study analysed 400 women from a random sample of 10,000 women aged 20 years. The participants answered a questionnaire and underwent a sleep examination.

The results found that obstructive sleep apnoea was present in 50% of women aged 20 years. The researchers also found links between age, obesity and hypertension: 80% of women with hypertension and 84% of obese women suffered from sleep apnoea.

Additionally, severe sleep apnoea was present in 31% of obese women aged 55-70 years old.

Lead author Professor Karl Franklin said: "We were very surprised to find such a high occurrence of sleep apnoea in women, as it is traditionally thought of as a male disorder. These findings suggest that clinicians should be particularly aware of the association between sleep apnoea and obesity and hypertension, in order to identify patients who could also be suffering from the sleeping disorder."

Source: **European Lung Foundation**

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