

Oropharyngeal cancer patients experience post-surgery sleep apnea

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Nearly all patients who underwent surgery to treat oropharyngeal cancer experienced some degree of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), according to new research presented at the 2009 American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO, in San Diego, CA.

The pilot study, which collected data from 22 [patients](#) treated for oropharyngeal [cancer](#), found that among those who underwent primary [surgery](#) with free flap reconstruction, 93 percent had OSA as defined by a common measurement scale, with 67 percent defined as experiencing moderate or severe OSA (respiratory disturbance index greater than 15). Furthermore, 100 percent of those treated with radiation or chemotherapy (including some of the surgical group) developed OSA, although only one-third of these patients had moderate or severe OSA.

The authors intend to continue their research with a larger pre-post treatment cohort study. They believe OSA may play a significant role in treatment related fatigue in this patient population. They also contend that unrecognized OSA may lead to additional comorbidity in this patient population, and the diagnosis and treatment of [sleep apnea](#) postoperatively may improve quality of life for these patients.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology

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