

Economic burden of undiagnosed sleep apnea in US is nearly \$150 billion per year

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Illustration of obstruction of ventilation. Credit: Habib M'henni / public domain

Today the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) released a

new analysis, titled "Hidden health crisis costing America billions," that reveals the staggering cost of undiagnosed obstructive sleep apnea. A companion report was also released, titled "In an age of constant activity, the solution to improving the nation's health may lie in helping it sleep better," which summarizes the results of an online survey completed by patients currently being treated for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Both reports were commissioned by the AASM and prepared by the global research and consulting firm Frost & Sullivan.

OSA is a chronic disease that is rising in prevalence in the U.S. Frost & Sullivan estimates that OSA afflicts 29.4 million American men and women, which represents 12 percent of the U.S. adult population. They also calculated that diagnosing and treating every patient in the U.S. who has [sleep apnea](#) would produce an annual economic savings of \$100.1 billion.

Treating sleep apnea improves productivity and safety while reducing [health](#) care utilization, notes AASM Immediate Past President Dr. Nathaniel Watson. His editorial about the report is published in the August issue of the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*.

Frost & Sullivan calculated that the annual economic burden of undiagnosed sleep apnea among U.S. adults is approximately \$149.6 billion. The estimated costs include \$86.9 billion in lost productivity, \$26.2 billion in motor vehicle accidents and \$6.5 billion in workplace accidents. Untreated sleep apnea also increases the risk of costly health complications such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and depression. The report estimates that undiagnosed sleep apnea also costs \$30 billion annually in increased health care utilization and medication costs related to these comorbid health risks.

"The high quality, patient-centered care provided by board-certified [sleep medicine](#) physicians can significantly reduce the health and

economic burdens of sleep apnea," said AASM President Dr. Ronald Chervin.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is a sleep-related breathing disorder characterized by repetitive episodes of complete or partial upper airway obstruction occurring during sleep. Common warning signs for sleep apnea include snoring and gasping or choking during sleep, along with daytime sleepiness or fatigue. The major predisposing factor for sleep apnea is excess body weight. In some cases, weight loss can help improve or eliminate sleep apnea symptoms. One treatment option for sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy, which helps keep the airway open by providing a stream of air through a mask that is worn during sleep.

The companion report was based on a survey of 506 patients who are currently being treated for [obstructive sleep apnea](#). Results show a variety of positive impacts on patient health and quality of life when patients are treated for their OSA, including better sleep, greater productivity, and a reported 40 percent decline in workplace absences. Approximately 78 percent of patients reported that sleep apnea treatment was a good investment.

"Patients often report that they feel like a new person after receiving treatment for sleep apnea," said Chervin. "Restoring and maintaining healthy sleep is essential for the achievement of optimal health. We encourage people to seek care from a board-certified sleep medicine physician if they experience any symptoms of a sleep disorder."

In order to prepare these reports, Frost & Sullivan, interviewed key opinion leaders with specialties in economics, sleep medicine, productivity, mental health and accidents. The Frost & Sullivan research team also reviewed more than 100 studies on the impact of sleep apnea

and constructed detailed financial models leveraging collected research, results from a survey of 506 patients, and treatment fees pulled from public sources including the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) fee schedules.

More information: The reports are available for free download on the AASM website at www.aasmnet.org/sleep-apnea-economic-impact.aspx

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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