

Relief for people who struggle with CPAP masks

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Flinders University Professor Doug McEvoy, who worked with ENT surgeons including Professor Stuart MacKay on refining the new procedure. Credit: Flinders Foundation

A trial of a simple yet effective surgery has led Australian experts to promote it as an option to specialists around the world for managing difficult obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) cases.

After rigorous evaluation of the surgery, excellent outcomes were shown in sleep apnea patients who had been unable to use continuous positive pressure [airway](#) (CPAP) treatment, with patients achieved relief from snoring and disrupted sleep and experienced improved general health. according to a new report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

Almost 1 billion people are estimated to have OSA globally, with the main treatment CPAP tolerated by only half of those who try it. Almost 30% of people with OSA wake up very easily with light sleep and other problems caused by minor airway narrowing.

The multi-level surgical technique combining a new version of palate surgery with a low risk tongue procedure to create an improved airway resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of night-time apnoea events and improvements in [daytime sleepiness](#) and quality of life. After removing any tonsils, the palate is repositioned and the tongue treated to open up the airway and reduce obstruction.

Flinders University's Emeritus Professor Doug McEvoy says the surgery offers promise to millions of people around the world who suffer from obstructive sleep apnoea but cannot adapt to using a CPAP mask or similar device each night.

"This trial is the result of extensive prior research into the surgical treatment of sleep apnoea and gives new hope to people who, without treatment, would each day continue to feel sleepy and depressed and may have their lives cut short by the detrimental effects of long-term interrupted sleep," says Professor McEvoy. Lead author University of Wollongong Professor Stuart MacKay, who will give further details of the surgical clinical trial at the global online European Respiratory Society congress on 7 September and in a *JAMA* podcast, says about half of

patients prescribed CPAP treatment are not using it consistently long term.

"It's very exciting to see so many patients getting a better night's sleep with reduced snoring and less health risk after this [surgery](#), " says Professor MacKay.

The paper, 'Effect of Multilevel Upper Airway Surgery vs Medical Management on the Apnea-Hypopnea Index and Patient-Reported Daytime Sleepiness Among Patients with Moderate or Severe Obstructive Sleep Apnea: The SAMS Randomized Clinical Trial' (2020) is due to be published by *JAMA* on September 4.

More information: Stuart MacKay et al. Effect of Multilevel Upper Airway Surgery vs Medical Management on the Apnea-Hypopnea Index and Patient-Reported Daytime Sleepiness Among Patients With Moderate or Severe Obstructive Sleep Apnea, *JAMA* (2020). DOI: 10.1001/jama.2020.14265 , jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2770361

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