



PRESS RELEASE

1602 HUNTINGDON PIKE • MEADOWBROOK, PA 19006
215-938-3226 • 215-938-3232 FAX

Release: April 21, 2008
Contact: Grace Roche
(215) 938-3227
groche@holyredeemer.com

Holy Redeemer's upcoming seminar makes the connection between sleep apnea and heart disease

(MEADOWBROOK, PA) – As many as 20 million people suffer from sleep apnea, but not all realize the connection between sleep apnea and heart disease. On Tuesday, April 29, from 7 to 8 pm, medical director of Holy Redeemer's Sleep Disorders Center Dr. Edward Schuman will discuss the connection at Holy Redeemer Hospital's first floor auditorium in Meadowbrook.

Sleep apnea is a common medical condition in which your breathing temporarily stops or becomes shallow during sleep. In sleep apnea, breathing typically pauses for more than 10 seconds at a time – more than 20 times an hour – while you sleep. Then, each time you return to normal breathing, you may make a loud snoring sound. This is often recognized by a partner who is awakened by these irregular snoring patterns.

“The older you are, the more likely you are to snore. Snoring that is regular with each breath is common,” says Dr. Schuman. “However, snoring interrupted by gasps and deep breaths is problematic. Partners should listen for and be aware of these abnormal snoring patterns because if sleep apnea is left untreated, the condition can cause serious health problems.”

Sleep apnea increases your risk of heart disease due to a variety of factors. One of which is lack of oxygen. The struggle to breathe causes your body to release adrenaline-like substances into the bloodstream – the so-called fight-or-flight reflex. These substances, as well as the release of others that can eventually damage the lining of your body's blood vessels, might eventually cause or worsen heart problems and other forms of cardiovascular disease that include:

- ⇒ High blood pressure
- ⇒ Heart failure
- ⇒ Heart rhythm problems
- ⇒ Coronary artery disease
- ⇒ Hypertension
- ⇒ Stroke

Risk factors for sleep apnea include excess body weight, especially in the shoulder and neck; a collar size of greater than 17; large tonsils; or a family history of the condition.

To accurately diagnosis sleep apnea, a patient's sleep patterns are recorded in overnight or daytime studies and analyzed using sophisticated technology. Treatments include continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), which involves wearing a mask at night that blows air into the nose to keep the airway open; a custom-fit mouthpiece to advance the jaw and tongue and keep the airway open; or, surgical intervention.

If you have very mild sleep apnea, try avoiding alcoholic drinks at bedtime, losing weight, and sleeping on your side instead of your back.

“Patients have said, ‘You gave me my life back’ after they are able to sleep normally,” says Dr. Schuman. “Sleep apnea is definitely a treatable condition, and treatment can help you and your heart stay healthy, but the biggest step is to first seek appropriate medical attention.”

To register for Dr. Schuman's seminar or to learn more about sleep apnea and heart disease, please call 1-800-818-4747 or visit www.holyredeemer.com.

Holy Redeemer's Sleep Disorders Center, accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, offers advanced, comprehensive services and the most current diagnostic and treatment techniques available to help identify and treat a wide-range of sleep-related issues. The center is staffed by board-certified pulmonary physicians, neurologists and otolaryngology physicians and registered sleep and respiratory therapists. The team collaborates to diagnose and treat the following: sleep apnea, heavy snoring, restless leg syndrome, narcolepsy and other sleep-wake cycle disturbances. And the staff uses the latest equipment and conducts studies in a relaxing, hotel-like atmosphere – complete with queen-sized beds. For more information or to make an appointment with a sleep disorders specialist, call 215-938-3448 between 9 am and 5 pm.

###