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Better Sleep Apnea Diagnosis

By Kirsten Houmann, Ivanhoe Health Correspondent

ORLANDO, Fla. (Ivanhoe Newswire) -- For those with a dangerous sleep disorder called sleep apnea, better treatment may be on the way -- thanks to a new, convenient diagnostic device.

From the results of a recent study, researchers have determined the Holter-Oximeter to be a reliable device for diagnosing obstructive sleep apnea at home. The device is a useful tool in determining treatment of sleep apnea in both adults and children.

The study included 120 patients who used the device at home over a four-month period. Results show 97 percent of the tests administered provided usable data and a complete sleep report. In addition, patients reported the device was comfortable, giving it an average of two on a scale of zero to 10 where zero was the most comfortable.

The Holter-Oximeter uses electrodes and a probe to measure breathing, heart rate and oxygen saturation in the blood during sleep.

"When we're diagnosing and treating somebody with sleep apnea, we need to know how many events per hour they have had when they have stopped breathing, and that's what this device tells you," Jordan C. Stern, M.D., lead author of the study, told Ivanhoe.

Dr. Stern explained that the device will make diagnosing sleep apnea much easier on patients by saving them the hassle of going to a sleep lab.

"Studies have shown that sleeping in a sleep lab, you have to often spend two nights, because your first night, you're getting used to sleeping in a new environment," Dr. Stern said.

According to The American Association for Respiratory Care, sleep apnea affects up to 18 million Americans. The condition is associated with heart disease and stroke in adults and with attention deficit disorder in children.

SOURCE: Ivanhoe interview with Jordan C. Stern, M.D.; presented at the 2008 American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation Annual Meeting in Chicago, Ill., Sept. 21-24, 2008

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