Clinical profile of sleep apnea syndrome. A study at a University Hospital

Abdullah F. Al-Mobeireek, Feisal A. Al-Kassimi, Sulaiman A. Al-Majed, Mohammed S. Al-Hajjaj, Ahmed S. Bahammam, Iltifat Sultan

ABSTRACT

Objectives: To review a series of patients with sleep apnea syndrome, to promote more awareness and alert local health professionals to early diagnosis and treatment.

Methods: We studied, prospectively, 48 consecutive patients who were managed at the university hospital from 1992 to 1996.

Results: The male:female ratio was 1.4:1. The mean interval between onset of symptoms and the diagnosis was 5.5 years (range 0.25 to 30). In over half of the patients the diagnosis was not suspected upon referral. The mean body mass index was 42.8kg/m2, (range 25 to 76). Daytime hypoxemia was present in 28 patients (58%), while 26 (54%) had Pa CO2 > 45 mmHg, mainly as a result of obesity-hypoventilation syndrome. Significant proportions had systemic and pulmonary hypertension (60% and 23%), and 32% had ischemic heart disease. All patients, but one, tolerated continuous positive airway pressure, but cost of the equipment led some to prefer surgical treatment that is offered free.

Conclusions: This series shows a bias towards female sex and frequent association with obesity-hypoventilation syndrome. In many cases the diagnosis was not suspected suggesting poor recognition and awareness of sleep apnea syndrome. Monitoring pulse oximetry during sleep was helpful in the diagnosis and titration of continuous positive airway pressure. Ways of providing continuous positive airway pressure under the health system need to be studied.


From the Pulmonary Division, Department of Medicine, College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Received 6th October 1999. Accepted for publication in final form 6th December 1999.

Address correspondence and reprint request to: Dr. A. Al-Mobaireek, Associate Professor, Consultant Pulmonologist, Medical Department (38), College of Medicine, King Saud University, PO Box 2925, Riyadh 11461, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Tel No. +00966 (1) 4671521. Fax No. +00966 (1) 4672686. E-mail: mobeireek@yahoo.com