

Dental sleep medicine in education, practice and research

Fernanda R. Almeida

Received: 23 February 2011 / Revised: 4 March 2011 / Accepted: 8 March 2011 / Published online: 24 March 2011
© Springer-Verlag 2011

June of 2011 marks the 20th Annual Meeting Anniversary of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM). The AADSM started in the late 1980s when a group of clinicians and an academic found a common area of interest, the treatment of sleep apnea with oral appliances. Shortly after, the interest in this type of treatment increased to a point that there was a need to educate dentists new to the sleep communities. In 1991, a group of individuals (listed at the AADSM website) subscribed to the ideals and goals of the organization set forth in the bylaws and founded an organization called the Sleep Disorders Dental Society in order to ensure a solid base for the organization. At that time, there were a very small number of researchers in this field, and they, with the clinicians, have played an important role in promoting the clinical use of oral appliances and providing treatment and resources for those who work directly with patients. Twenty years have passed, now the society is called the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine and the field has achieved respect and has expanded into various areas of dentistry.

Dental Sleep Medicine (DSM) in a broad view can today be summarized as a field of research and clinical practice related to various areas of dentistry associated with sleep, including but not limited to the use of oral appliances and upper airway surgery strategies for the treatment of sleep-disordered breathing (SDB) in adults and children. In addition, it addresses the analysis of the upper airway,

craniofacial characteristics, growth and development linked to sleep disorders; sleep bruxism and orofacial pain related to sleep. Drs. Zarb and Sessle have stated that “the science and clinical implications of sleep medicine should resonate strongly with the dental profession. Not only does the physiologic and behavioral state of our own, and indeed our patients' sleep experiences involve a significant part of daily life, but DSM is a rapidly evolving area of health care [1].”

SDB is a major health problem, and it is one of the major areas of interest in the field of DSM. The interest of medicine in diagnosing and treating SDB has increased as recognition and consequences of these disorders have been documented. Medical school surveys of curriculum hours in all sleep disorders reveal a continuing increase in content in undergraduate programs. However, the number of hours of sleep medicine taught in dentistry still averages only 2.6 h. As seen in the article published in this issue, Simmons and Pullinger [2] describe that the total hours taught today are inadequate given the epidemic proportions of society affected by sleep disorders, the financial and societal impact and medical consequences of nontreatment. DSM should play important roles in the future dental undergraduate and graduate programs.

The research supporting the clinical aspects of DSM has grown exponentially and AADSM has promoted research including the presentation of awards. Starting in 1999, the the Pierre Robin Academic Award has been presented at the Annual Meeting to individuals who have exhibited exceptional initiative and progress in the areas of education and academic research with original contributions to the field of DSM. Previous recipients of this award include Alan A. Lowe, D.M.D., Ph.D. (1999); Daniel I. Loubé, M.D. (2000); Glenn T. Clark, D.D.S. (2001); Wolfgang Schmidt-Nowara, M.D. (2002); Rosalind D. Cartwright, Ph.D. (2003); Kathleen

F. R. Almeida (✉)
Faculty of Dentistry, University of British Columbia,
2199 Wesbrook Mall,
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z3, Canada
e-mail: falmeida@interchange.ubc.ca

Ferguson, M.D. (2004); Gilles Lavigne, D.D.S., Ph.D. (2005); Peter Cistulli, MD, Ph.D. (2006); Christian Guilleminault, M.D. (2007); Marie Marklund, D.D.S, Ph.D (2008); Sergio Tufik, M.D., Ph.D. (2009); and Stuart J. Menn, M.D. (2010).

In 2009, formal abstract presentation and research awards were initiated. As chair of the research committee, I was delighted with this achievement. The AADSM has presented six awards each year and the publications of these abstracts occur here in *Sleep & Breathing*.

The AADSM together with their official journal, *Sleep & Breathing*, play a major role in international recognition in the field of sleep medicine through excellent publications and the enhancement of professionals. The directed courses, publication of practice parameters and institution of a board certified exam by the AADSM all improve the quality of practitioners in this field. In addition, the time is ripe for DSM to establish a high standard in research and practice, and this resonates in better patient care and highly qualified research.

Together with the 20th Annual Meeting Anniversary of AADSM, it is with great pleasure that *Sleep & Breathing* has accepted a significant number of excellent articles in the field of DSM, and for the first time, we have an entire edition of *Sleep & Breathing* dedicated to DSM. Following an initial idea from Christian Guilleminault to have all DSM papers in one issue of *Sleep & Breathing*, I hope all articles of this issue and others will enlighten you to the depth and quality of research that is now supporting this field and expand the collective interest in the fascinating area of DSM.

References

1. Zarb G, Sessle B (2009) Sleep medicine for dentists. A practical overview. Quintessence Publishing, page ix
2. Simmons M, Pullinger A (2011) Teaching of Dental Sleep Medicine in U.S dental schools. *Sleep and Breathing* (in press)