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Contact: Kathleen McCann of the Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine, 708-492-0930 or kmccann@aasmnet.org

Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine Supports New Guidelines for Using Oral Appliances to Treat Sleep Apnea and Snoring

WESTCHESTER, Ill., February 1, 2006 – The Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (ADSM) supports new guidelines published by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine in the January 2006 issue of SLEEP regarding the use of oral appliances to treat obstructive sleep apnea and snoring.

Oral appliances are a recommended first line treatment option for patients with mild to moderate sleep apnea, according to the practice parameters formed by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine's Standards of Practice Committee. It is also appropriate to use them to treat snoring patients who do not respond to behavioral interventions such as weight loss or sleep-position change.

The ADSM fully endorses these treatment guidelines, according to its president, Dr. Kent E. Moore. "The Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine is pleased that these new standards of practice validate the use of oral appliances as an effective and non-invasive treatment option for millions of people who are suffering from a sleep-related breathing disorder," said Dr. Moore. "For many people with obstructive sleep apnea, an oral appliance is the best and most convenient treatment available."

While snoring is common and often harmless, it can also be a warning sign of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a serious medical condition that affects an estimated 18 million people in the United States. Dangers related to OSA include severe daytime sleepiness, an increased risk of high blood pressure, and higher rates of stroke and heart attack.

"Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the tongue and soft tissues in the back of the throat collapse and block the airway during sleep, which produces pauses in breathing that prevent air from getting to the lungs," explained Dr. Moore. "These pauses can occur a few times or several hundred times per night."

The new practice parameters also affirm that continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy is more effective than oral appliances at reducing measures of respiratory disturbance and should therefore be the first treatment option considered for sleep apnea. An oral appliance is recommended, however, for a patient with mild to moderate OSA who either prefers it to CPAP or is unable to successfully use CPAP.

An oral appliance is similar in appearance to an orthodontic retainer or a sports mouthguard. When worn during sleep, it maintains an opened and unobstructed airway in the throat by repositioning or

stabilizing the lower jaw, tongue, soft palate or uvula. There are many types of oral appliances, with some designed to only treat snoring and others for both snoring and sleep apnea therapy.

The practice parameters were based on an accompanying review of the evidence found in the scientific literature that was performed by an expert task force. They also outline the steps a patient should take to seek help for a sleep-related breathing disorder. The severity of the problem should first be assessed by a sleep clinician who can then decide if referral is needed to a qualified dentist. A dentist who is trained in the treatment of snoring and sleep apnea will properly fit and adjust an oral appliance to meet the individual patient's needs. Patients should then return for follow-up visits with both their sleep clinician and dentist to monitor the success of the treatment.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine is a professional membership organization dedicated to the advancement of sleep medicine and related research. It also serves as the national accrediting body for sleep disorder centers and laboratories. The Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (ADSM) is a professional membership organization that promotes the use and research of oral appliances and oral surgery for the treatment of sleep disordered breathing and provides training and resources for those who work directly with patients.

For a professional assessment of a sleep-related problem, visit www.sleepcenters.org to find an accredited sleep center near you. To find a dentist in your area who is trained in the treatment of snoring and sleep apnea, go to www.dentalsleepmed.org.

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