

Portable Monitoring in the Diagnosis of Obstructive Sleep Apnea

An Interim Statement from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine

The role of portable monitoring devices in the diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea remains controversial. Repeated assessments of this technology have determined that there is insufficient evidence to recommend portable monitoring as an alternative to attended polysomnography, except in a few selected circumstances. Nevertheless, portable monitoring is widely used, especially in certain regions of the United States. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has recently published an influential report on Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation in which research in this area is deemed an urgent priority. The AASM is disturbed by the uncontrolled use of this technology, especially by non-physicians and physicians not trained in clinical Sleep Medicine. Concerns over the burgeoning use of portable monitoring, as well as the release of the recent IOM report, has led the AASM to set up an expert task force to examine under what circumstances and how the procedures should be performed.

Until the results of the task force are available, physicians who choose to use portable monitoring should follow these recommendations:

1. When used, portable monitoring must be combined with a clinical assessment, and must be interpreted within a comprehensive evaluation of the patient.
2. Studies using these devices should be performed, read and interpreted only in AASM accredited sleep laboratories or centers, or by board certified Sleep Specialists.
3. Decisions on therapy should be based on both the results of the studies as well as knowledge of the individual patient's symptoms.

The AASM strongly endorses the report of the IOM in recommending research into the future role of portable monitoring in the diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea. These projects should encompass the development and validation of new and existing technology, should be large enough to be statistically valid, and should focus particularly on outcome measures. The AASM has listed this topic as among its highest research priorities for the National Center for Sleep Disorders Research. The AASM will be working with the American Sleep Medicine Foundation to initiate such research projects.