Sleep apnea sufferers have options, one being oral appliances, which have been approved by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) for mild to moderate cases, and for use in cases where an oral appliance is a better fit for patients like Janice who has a difficult airway.

“Oral appliances (OAs) are indicated for use in patients with mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which 25 to 50 percent do not tolerate the standard treatment therapy CPAP. So many dentists see a value in helping patients who would otherwise go untreated and have a higher risk of heart disease, obesity, stroke and diabetes. Oral devices are oral appliances (OAs), which look like mouth guards, to treat mild and moderate sleep apnea patients. OAs are also approved for severe sleep apnea patients who cannot tolerate CPAP. This device repositions a patient’s lower jaw and tongue forward to maintain an open airway.”

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea or is unable or unwilling to wear your prescribed CPAP unit, dentistry has an alternative. Dental mouthpieces* that support the lower jaw in a forward position can provide a more restful, healthful, quiet night’s sleep.

To Stop Snoring, Improve Health

Though the formal diagnosis is made by a physician in specialist, certain dentists are learning how to recognize and treat sleep apnea. “I think what is in part driving this trend is the fact that 40 to 50 percent of patients treated with the classical treatment, CPAP, just don’t adapt to it, despite its high efficacy,” says Norman Blumenstock, D.D.S., Diplomate, American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine. James A. Jones, a graphic designer in New York, successfully treated his sleep apnea on his own after pursuing options “I used to fall asleep on the subway and couldn’t drive a car for more than two hours without having to pull over and wake around because I got so sleepy,” he recalls.

“The oral appliance is a mouth piece, bridge, plate, or mouth guard that advances the lower jaw slowly forward, and when you move the lower jaw, you move the tongue away from the airway,” explains John R. White, D.D.S. of New York, successfully treated his sleep apnea with an oral appliance. “I look down his throat and see a broad tongue, like a grinding guard, that fits on the top and bottom teeth. It advances the lower jaw and tongue forward, and when you move the lower jaw, you move the tongue away from the airway,” explains John R. White, D.D.S. of New York, successfully treated his sleep apnea with an oral appliance. “That is in part driving this trend is the fact that 40 to 50 percent of patients treated with the classical treatment, CPAP, just don’t adapt to it, despite its high efficacy,” says Norman Blumenstock, D.D.S., Diplomate, American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine.

**What is the oral appliance therapy?**

A: Eighteen million Americans suffer from obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), of which 25 to 50 percent do not tolerate the standard treatment therapy CPAP. So many dentists see a value in helping patients who would otherwise go untreated and have a higher risk of heart disease, obesity, stroke and diabetes. 

**Where are dentists learning oral appliance therapy?**

A: The AADS (American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine) has been the driving force in OAS education, offering information and advanced courses for dentists. Additionally, Touro University and the University of California—Los Angeles—has recognized the need for qualified ODS dentists and started offering courses. There is a list of qualified ODS dentists on the AADS website.

**Why do so many dentists now treat sleep apnea?**

A: The current trend of OAS education is growing. A recent study found that 25 percent of dentists are now treating OSA. As a result, many dentists are seeking education and training in this field. AADS: Growing number of dentists now treat sleep apnea.