

# Generating Awareness for Oral Appliance Therapy

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**D**iagnosis of sleep apnea is growing year-over-year, driving more patients to seek treatment options, and making it more vital than ever before to increase awareness of oral appliance therapy as an effective treatment alternative.

In support of its membership and the field of dental sleep medicine, the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine is undertaking a multi-year public relations initiative to educate the public about oral appliance therapy and drive patients who can't tolerate CPAP to LocalSleepDentist.com to find local AADSM members. This campaign has reached people with national media stories, industry trade articles and social media events, generating more than 175 million impressions in two years—with more on the way.

## LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR OAT

### Educating Patients

Since 2012, the AADSM public relations campaign has gotten stories about OAT featured in a broad range of national consumer media outlets, including key men's, women's and health magazines, health-focused radio programs and websites, news broadcasts and newspapers in the U.S. and Canada. As a result, oral appliance therapy has been national media stories, including:

- **First for Women** profiled an AADSM member and his patient in a story about upper airway resistance syndrome in its February 2013 issue, which was distributed to more than 1.2 million readers. The two-page article explains how oral appliance therapy is an effective, "life-changing" solution for people suffering from the disease and paints a very positive picture of the solutions dental sleep medicine can provide.
- **Real Simple**, a national women's lifestyle magazine, featured oral appliance therapy as a remedy for snoring in the April 2013 edition, reaching more than 1.9 million readers. The article, "Snoring Remedies," informs consumers that OAT is a comfortable, dentist-provided solution with an 80 percent success rate for snorers and patients with mild to moderate sleep apnea.
- **WomansDay.com and Prevention.com**, websites for the national magazines of the same names, both included OAT in stories about sleep apnea and snoring. The March 2013 *Woman's Day* article focused on the potential health effects and treatment options for snoring with a tips-focused story. The March 2014 *Prevention* article centered on surprising causes for erectile dysfunction, citing sleep apnea as a trigger for the problem and OAT as a possible solution that's easier to sleep with.
- **Huffington Post**, a wide-reaching news website, featured Dr. B Gail Demko, AADSM past president, as a guest expert blogger. Her blog post on "Unmasking Sleep Apnea

Treatments: What to Try If CPAP Doesn't Work for You" appeared in May 2014 reaching more than three million potential readers.

- **USA TODAY** insert on lung health was co-sponsored by both AADSM and AASM. The features included a Q&A with AADSM founding president Dr. Robert Rogers and an advertisement driving sleep apnea sufferers to find a local AADSM member. The supplement reached more than 1.4 million readers.
- Television segments on nationally-syndicated morning news programs, including "**The Daily Buzz**" and "**Life Love Shopping**," aired in February 2013 and August 2013. In total, the segments ran in more than 200 markets nationwide, reaching nearly three million viewers. The segments highlighted oral appliance therapy as an effective alternative to CPAP and an easier travel solution for sleep apnea sufferers on the go, and featured the LocalSleepDentist.com website.

### Social Media Builds Buzz

Beyond traditional media outreach, the AADSM PR campaign also reaches potential patients through partnerships with a number of high-profile bloggers. Social efforts have included:

- A "**Snoring Mad**" online chat, held on Twitter in October 2013, drove conversations about sleep-related breathing issues and highlighted the solutions AADSM members can provide through the use of OAT. The chat had hundreds of participants, resulting in 2,500 tweets and more than 11 million online impressions.
- "**Keep Calm and Sleep On**" Blogger Tour, conducted November 2013-January 2014, tapped influential bloggers to educate consumers about OAT. Sixteen total blog posts included images of an oral appliance, information on the path to treatment and a call-to-action to visit localsleepdentist.com to find an AADSM dentist locally. The effort generated 1.1 million impressions and 1,700 reader comments including remarks "I need this. I really did not want to be hooked to a machine, so this would be great!" and "I think I might have sleep apnea, and I keep putting off asking my doctor about it. After reading the list of scary health problems, I will for sure check into it!"

### Reaching Industry Partners

To advance dental sleep medicine among sleep doctors and dentists, AADSM reached out to industry journals and magazines to help spur the continued growth of the field. Through announcing facility accreditations, highlighting recent research studies and providing industry-leading bylined articles and webinar participation, AADSM has furthered awareness of dental sleep medicine in the medical community.

Over the past two years, AADSM experts have been profiled in leading industry publications including *AGD Impact*, *New Dentist*, *Sleep Review*, *DentistryIQ*, *ADVANCE for Respiratory Care & Sleep Medicine* and more.

## EMPOWERING MEMBERS

In addition to telling the story about OAT to national media, the AADSM is working to provide individual members with the tools they need to replicate this PR success at the local level by providing the AADSM Member PR Toolkit. The Toolkit is filled with customizable press releases, phone scripts, media outreach tips and advice that allow members to leverage the national campaign at the local level. All of the pieces can be used to establish relationships with influential media and sleep physicians—and ultimately generate phone calls and business for AADSM members. **Download the updated AADSM Member PR Toolkit today at <http://www.aadsm.org/PromotionalResources.aspx>**, and build buzz for oral appliance therapy in your community!

## FALL PR ACTIVITIES

The AADSM continues to generate awareness with prospective patients in the third year of its public relations initiative.

- In September, the AADSM coordinated publicity for oral appliance therapy in a series of television segments about fall wellness. The segments aired on 10 local morning television news programs as well as nationally on “The Daily Buzz.”
- In October, AADSM Board President Kathleen Bennett and board member Thomas Schell traveled to New York City on behalf of AADSM to introduce influential health reporters from top magazines to oral appliance therapy and explain the benefits of the treatment.

- In early 2015, the AADSM will conduct a proprietary survey about the effects of sleep apnea on bed partners. The resulting statistics will be used to build awareness of the need for an effective treatment with which patients can more easily comply.

Building awareness for oral appliance therapy among prospective patients, new dentists and sleep physicians is a crucial step towards the continued growth of dental sleep medicine. With AADSM support and ongoing, impactful media outreach, a conversation about alternative sleep apnea treatments is beginning—and generating awareness across the country.

## AADSM MEMBER PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLKIT

### Activation Tip

Put the toolkit to work for you today by customizing the “New Year’s Resolution Press Release” to your practice. This seasonal press release raises awareness about the relationship between getting quality sleep and achieving health resolutions, and positions a trip to the dentist as a necessary next step to a healthier New Year. To use the release, simply download the toolkit from the Promotional Resources page of the AAADSM website and replace the red text in the release Word document with information specific to your practice. Make sure all of the text is turned back to black before you email it to health reporters at local newspapers. Reporter email addresses can usually be found on the newspaper’s website. This release should be sent to reporters in early December to get a jump on holiday vacations, with a short note offering more information and an interview with a local patient who used the treatment to better their sleep in 2014.