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Missing link between teeth grinding and sleep is discovered by Sadler Clinic doctor

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Teeth clenching or grinding – known as bruxism – is a common problem that may lead to headaches, facial pain and TMJ disorder. Bruxism has puzzled dentists and physicians for years, limiting treatment success of these disorders.

Research conducted by neurologist and sleep disorder specialist, Jerald H. Simmons, M.D., of the Sadler Clinic Sleep Disorders Center, has demonstrated that a main cause for bruxism relates to breathing problems during sleep such as snoring and obstructive sleep apnea.

With years of observation and experience in treating patients with OSA and bruxism, he recognized the relationship of these conditions. This led him to seek out the assistance of Ron Prehn, DDS, where together they studied more than 700 patients with OSA. This is the first research in the world to ever conclude that bruxism, while asleep, is an attempt to bring the jaw and tongue forward. Bruxism stops the back of the tongue from blocking the airway and is the brain's



SIMMONS

way of preventing this blockage from occurring.

Simmons treats patients with a variety of methods:

- Masks that fit over the nose to deliver positive pressure;

- special dental appliances that bring the jaw forward to open the back of the airway; and

- surgery to remove crowded tissue in the back of the throat.

He also finds it helpful in some patients to use a combination of all these treatment approaches. He frequently seeks the assistance of Prehn to make customized continuous positive airway pressure masks for some patients.

These are held on the face using a special dental appliance, eliminating the need for straps on the head and chin.

"I saw multiple doctors, and none of them were able to take care of my symptoms. As soon as Dr. Simmons' treatment opened up my airway, my clenching stopped," patient Diane Fitch said. "I think Dr. Simmons' research has found that missing link."

Other conditions the Sadler Clinic Sleep Disorders Center has excelled in treating include:

- ADHD, which is now recognized to frequently be a result of poor, non-restorative sleep;

- fibromyalgia and chronic

fatigue, both also now known to be a result of problems with sleep; and

- morning headaches, a condition usually resulting from disturbances in sleep that is not properly diagnosed in many patients.

Simmons and Prehn have presented their results to dentists and physicians at national medical and dental conferences. This new concept has created a tide within the dental field because most dentists are challenged by patients who have bruxism. Now they have a new prospective and alternative approach in treating these patients.

"It is amazing how much

improvement we can provide in patients by properly treating disturbances in their sleep," Simmons said. "We are fortunate in this community that the Sadler Clinic has provided me the opportunity to build a sleep center that surpasses the quality of those in large academic institutions."

Simmons' sleep center at the Sadler Clinic is the largest in Montgomery County and amongst the largest in the Houston area. For more information about his work and the sleep center, go to www.HoustonSleep.net and watch interviews of patients with TMJ and other conditions he treats.