Bariatric surgery

Understanding the risks of obstructive sleep apnea and bariatric surgery
Prevalence of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)

Obesity is considered to be a major risk factor for the development and progression of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). OSA is an independent risk factor for patients undergoing bariatric surgery. In fact, it is estimated that 78% of patients considering bariatric surgery may have OSA, and these patients are 12 to 30 times more likely to have comorbidities including hypertension, diabetes, and OSA.

As many as five to 10 percent of adults – almost 20 million people – in the United States have OSA, 85 to 90 percent of this population have not been identified. Nine percent of men and four percent of women have an apnea hypopnea index (AHI) > 15. Four percent of middle-aged men and two percent of middle-aged women have an AHI > 5 and daytime sleepiness.

Before you perform bariatric surgery on your obese patients, know the risk factors.

- Unrecognized and untreated OSA is the most likely cause of unexplained deaths following bariatric surgery.
- Patients with OSA have a three-fold risk of perioperative mortality.
- Sleep apnea is a predictor of death in bariatric surgery for women and African-American men.

The prevalence of OSA is higher in the following ethnic groups:

- Asians
- Hispanic woman
- African Americans

Awareness and safety

Obesity was found to be a factor in 31% of malpractice claims for difficult intubation. Clinical evidence indicates that patients with OSA may have a higher perioperative risk and post-operative risk of complications associated with respiratory distress and obstruction.

Initial patient screening questions

- Has your breathing/snoring at night bothered others?
- Do you feel tired during the day?
- Do you have a history of high blood pressure or not breathing while you sleep?
- Do you have Type 2 diabetes?
- Do you have a recent motor vehicle accident?
- Do you have a family history of OSA?
- Do you have crowding of the upper airway including large tonsils or adenoids?
- Do you have any other past medical history of OSA?
- Do you have a recent heart attack?
- Do you have a history of sleep apnea?