

Race and Gender Disparities in Sleep-Disordered Breathing

Ethnicity and race are important factors in determining risk, developing diagnostic assessments, and implementing treatment strategies for a variety of disorders. This is no less true for sleep-disordered breathing; however, there are not many epidemiological or clinical studies that include appreciable amounts of non-whites in the United States, and even fewer that make direct comparisons between races. Studies that have investigated race-related disparities in sleep-disordered breathing report that African-Americans have a higher risk for obstructive sleep apnea, particularly men, and are less likely to adhere to continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). Here, we present a cross-sectional analysis of studies that examine racial disparities in several measures of risk, diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes of obstructive sleep apnea. These studies shed light on the complex interactions between race and the etiology of obstructive sleep apnea and underscore the need for greater inclusion of non-whites, in studies of sleep-disordered breathing.