### In Search of a Few Good Z's

E veryone can attest to the repercussions of a bad night's sleep. The following day we feel like we're moving in slow motion — our concentration is impaired, and our emotions can go from one extreme to the other. Most people view sleep, or the lack thereof, as a quality-of-life issue, and sufferers, as well as their bedmates, resign to live with it.

In the case of Donovan Samuels, a maintenance technician for a North Shore-LIJ Health System office building, it took the insistence of his wife for him to finally address his daytime sleepiness. She had spent one too many nights on the living room couch, unable to sleep in her own bed because of her husband's heavy snoring.

#### WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Fortunately, Mr. Samuels didn't need to go any further than a few steps from his workplace to appease his wife and receive consultation. He works in the same location as the North Shore-LIJ Sleep Disorders Center, a state-of-the-art, fully accredited diagnostic and treatment facility, where physicians, psychologists and technologists are dedicated to sleep disorder medicine. This multispecialty center assesses the neurological, psychological, respiratory and cardiovascular aspects of abnormal sleep, including severe daytime sleepiness, insomnia, sleep apnea and snoring, abnormal behaviors and movement disorders during sleep.

"When patients come in for the first time, they can expect a comprehensive consultation," said Harly Greenberg, MD, medical director of the North Shore-LIJ Sleep Disorders Center in Great Neck. "We evaluate complaints or concerns about their sleep and relate the information to their full medical history. Frequently, we conduct tests to help determine whether the patient has a sleep disorder. From

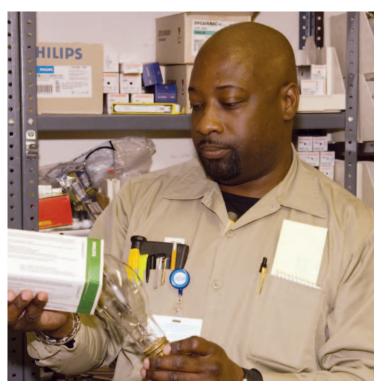
there, we develop a therapeutic design for treatment."

As part of his evaluation, Mr. Samuels underwent a sleep study, also called polysomnography, the most precise way to determine the Mounting evidence shows untreated sleep apnea is life threatening.

cause of many sleep complaints. The sleep study usually requires staying overnight at the sleep center where brain waves, breathing patterns, heart activity and body movement are monitored and recorded.

"It was a good experience," said Mr. Samuels. "They hooked me up to the monitoring equipment. I watched TV for a while and then fell asleep for the night."

"The center offers the highest quality of care and provides the patient with a warm and friendly environment," said Stacy Glickman, adminis-



Therapy for his sleep disorder made a big difference for Donovan Samuels.

trative director of pulmonary, critical care and sleep medicine for the North Shore-LIJ Health System. "Scheduling a study is convenient for those who work, since the center is open seven days a week."

#### **HEART OF THE PROBLEM**

After analyzing the data gathered from the sleep study, the center diagnosed Mr. Samuels with sleep apnea, a serious yet easily treated sleep disorder that affects more than 18 million American adults. Sleep apnea occurs when breathing is briefly and repeatedly interrupted during sleep, causing fragmented sleep and low blood oxygen levels. If left untreated, the combination of disturbed sleep and oxygen starvation can lead to mood and memory problems, hypertension and heart disease.

"Mounting evidence shows untreated sleep apnea is life threatening," said Dr. Greenberg. "Sleep apnea is linked with adverse cardiovascular events and diseases, such as high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of sleep apnea because effective diagnosis and treatment are available."

For Mr. Samuels, Dr. Greenberg prescribed continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), the leading therapy for sleep apnea. Patients wear a face or nasal mask during sleep that is connected to a pump filled with water. The device provides a positive flow of air

continued on page 7

## The Sleep Heart Health Study

The Sleep Heart Health Study is a landmark multicenter cohort study being implemented by the National Institutes of Health's National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute to investigate the cardiovascular consequences of sleep-disordered breathing. In 2007, data released from the study indicated that people with obstructive sleep apnea are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease, especially congestive heart failure.

The study has been following more than 6,000 men and women, and its most recent findings show that moderate to severe sleep apnea is associated with an increased risk of death from any cause in middle-aged adults, especially men.

Specifically, after an average of eight years, patients who had severe sleep apnea at enrollment were 1.5 times more likely to die, regardless of age, gender, race or weight, or whether they were a current or former smoker or had other medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes.

The North Shore-LIJ Health System seeks adult volunteers with primary insomnia to participate in a research study involving treatment. Qualified volunteers can participate in the study at no cost. For more information, call Harly Greenberg, MD, at 516/465-3899.



continued from page 6

into the nasal passages to keep the airways open. Most insurance companies pay for sleep testing and for CPAP treatment.

"I've been on CPAP therapy for close to a year," said Mr. Samuels. "At night, I put water in it, put on my mask and then turn it on. It's very easy to sleep with it. I love it. It's my new best friend."

It goes without saying that Ms. Samuels is reaping the benefits of her husband's CPAP treatment, too. ■

Select physicians with privileges at North Shore University Hospital and LIJ Medical Center offer help with sleep disorders. Ask your primary care physician for a referral. To make an appointment for a consultation with the North Shore-LIJ Sleep Disorders Center, call 877/SLEEP MD (877/753-3763) or 516/465-3899.

# Weight and Sleep Apnea

Experts know that excess weight may cause obstructive sleep apnea. Extra fat, especially in the neck and upper body, can block airflow and disrupt sleep. Fortunately, losing weight can help treat the problem.

But people with sleep apnea disorder often have trouble losing weight, possibly because the disorder makes them too tired during the day to exercise and burn calories.

In addition, there may be a biological link. Studies have shown that overweight people with obstructive sleep apnea are likelier to gain more weight than are heavy people without sleep problems. Some researchers think that's because obstructive sleep apnea may be linked to abnormal nerve function. This could affect the body's resistance to a key protein called leptin, which, in turn, is linked to weight control.

If you have sleep apnea, a weight-loss plan involving exercise and diet will help you reduce symptoms. Try to exercise 20 to 30 minutes a day, but preferably not within five to six hours of bedtime.

Your doctor may also be able to help you form a plan to lessen your sleep apnea and help you sleep easier.

To make an appointment for a sleep medicine consultation, call 877/SLEEP MD (877/753-3763) or 516/465-3899.