

MEDIA RELEASE: 6th July 2005

SEARCH IS ON FOR DRUG TO TREAT SLEEP APNEA

Researchers from Sydney's Woolcock Institute of Medical Research are attempting to revolutionise the way sleep apnea is treated by investigating a new pharmaceutical treatment. Two pharmaceutical drugs will be investigated to see whether they work to treat sleep apnea and at what dose.

Associate Professor Ron Grunstein, Head of Sleep and Circadian Research Group at the Woolcock Institute, and Chief Investigator, said identifying a drug to treat obstructive sleep apnea would transform the way the condition was treated in Australia.

Currently we find many sufferers are reticent to sleep attached to a machine. Not only does CPAP restrict their movement during sleep, but it can also be a source of frustration for partners who share their bed.

We believe the identification of a safe drug to treat the condition would see a lot more sufferers coming forward for treatment and a subsequent improvement in their health.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a condition where breathing is interrupted during sleep, causing disrupted sleep, daytime sleepiness and difficulty remembering. It is estimated that five percent of the Australian population suffer from the condition.

Currently the standard treatments for sleep apnea sufferers include Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP - a breathing device which is strapped to the patients face while they sleep), dental devices or surgery.

The Woolcock Institute aims to involve 142 people in four trial centres across the Sydney metropolitan area. Trial participants must live in the greater Sydney area, suffer from obstructive sleep apnea and meet a range of other criteria to be eligible for the studies.

People interested in taking part in the Woolcock Institute's Sleep Apnea trials can telephone: 1800 332 101 or visit www.woolcock.org.au