



AASM statement: CDC data on drowsy driving highlights need to treat sleep illness

Drivers should seek treatment for suspected sleep apnea to reduce risk of drowsy driving

DARIEN, IL, Jan. 3, 2013 – New drowsy driving data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention emphasizes the importance of seeking treatment for an ongoing sleep illness such as sleep apnea, reports the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

In the largest survey ever to examine the topic of drowsy driving, the CDC found that 4.2 percent of 147,076 respondents reported having fallen asleep while driving at least one time during the previous 30 days. Men were more likely to report drowsy driving than women. Statistical analysis found that sleeping for six hours or less per night and self-reported snoring each were related independently to drowsy driving.

"Drowsy driving is a serious risk to personal health and public safety, and snoring is an important warning sign that should not be ignored," said AASM President Dr. Sam Fleishman. "Loud and frequent snoring is a common symptom of obstructive sleep apnea, a sleep illness that often causes excessive daytime sleepiness."

The CDC analysis involved data from a set of questions about insufficient sleep administered through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) during 2009–2010. U.S. adults in 19 states and the District of Columbia were surveyed.

The CDC encouraged drivers to seek treatment for sleep disorders and noted that the actual prevalence of drowsy driving is likely to be higher. Drivers often are unaware that they have fallen asleep behind the wheel. The survey also excluded teens, who have a high risk of drowsy driving.

The public health implications of drowsy driving are clear: The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety estimates that more than 16 percent of fatal crashes involve a drowsy driver.

To promote awareness of drowsy driving, the AASM released a free online presentation describing the signs, causes and effects of driver fatigue and some strategies to manage it. SAFE-D: Sleep, Alertness and Fatigue Education for Drivers is available at www.aasmnet.org/safed.aspx. The presentation also is on YouTube and Vimeo to share or embed.

The AASM notes that most adults need seven to eight hours of nightly sleep to feel alert and well-rested during the day. However, about 70 million Americans suffer from sleep problems that may prevent them from sleeping well.

Anyone with an ongoing sleep problem should seek help from a board certified sleep medicine physician and the team of medical professionals at an AASM accredited sleep disorders center. A directory of AASM accredited member sleep centers is available online at www.sleepeducation.com.

Source: CDC. Drowsy driving - 19 states and the District of Columbia, 2009–2010. *MMWR. Jan. 4, 2013. 61(51);1033-1037. Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6151a1.htm?s_cid=mm6151a1_w.*

Pete Friedmann, 847-859-9510, pete.friedmann@flcomm.com

Jonathan Lehrer, 847-859-9510, jonathan.lehrer@flcomm.com

Lynn Celmer, 630-737-9700, ext. 9364, lcelmer@aasmnet.org

The AASM is a professional membership society that is the leader in setting standards and promoting excellence in sleep medicine health care, education and research (www.aasmnet.org)

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine considers sleep disorders an illness that has reached epidemic proportions. Board certified sleep medicine physicians in an AASM accredited sleep center can provide effective treatment. AASM encourages patients to talk to their doctors about sleep problems or visit www.sleepeducation.com for a searchable directory of sleep centers.