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SLEEP APNEA DENTISTRY

A Long But Rewarding Journey

Written By Greg Thompson

At one time I had built my private practice Wheatland Dental in Dallas Texas into one of the largest dental practices in the United States with over 13 associate dentists. This was a huge practice which required that I not only train, inspire and manage an army of clinical staff. I also needed to keep my eyes and ears open for new opportunities, techniques and procedures that would bring enough patients to keep everyone busy. I have been treating sleep apnea for many years as an offshoot of my TMD practice.



Eric Dickerson & Harry Sugg

“ IT WAS CLEAR THAT I STILL NEEDED A CONSULTANT TO HELP BRING SLEEP APNEA DENTISTRY TO MY PATIENTS. THIS WAS WHEN I HIRED THAT CONSULTANT FROM ERIE PA, AND STARTED LONESTAR DENTAL MY SLEEP MEDICINE PRACTICE ”

I decided in 2010 that I would make this area a focus for my team. I made this decision for two reasons. First I wanted to do good for my patients who were struggling, and second Sleep Apnea Dentistry was reputed to be a very profitable and traffic inducing area of the business. I consider myself a CE junkie and relentless learner. I was not willing to add Sleep Apnea Dentistry to my practice without extensive training and consultation. With a practice the size of Wheatland Dental it just is not possible to work impulsively. I studied with some of the best, Harold Gelb DDS, Ed Spiegel DDS and also took some 2-day courses, John Tucker DMD, Ellen Crean DDS and Sleep Group Solutions. Sadly many of the courses are two-day sales demos by folks who really don't use the materials they are presenting. If they are, many of them don't have a national perspective. Not wanting to beat a dead horse but my practice is larger than

that of the presenters and it is in Texas. I really need context and a guide that understands the regionalism of the sleep business.

I ultimately ended up in an American Sleep and Breathing Academy "ASBA" study club with Rod Willey DDS, Paul Van Wallegham DDS, Ken Burley DDS, Mark Collins DDS, Alan Gerbholtz DDS and J.C. Goodwin DDS. What a great group of guys, all at the same entry level I was, now all of them right at the top. I learned a lot of practical practice pearls. I am still in touch with all these guys at the ASBA meeting in Scottsdale every year.

It was clear that I still needed a consultant to help bring Sleep Apnea Dentistry to my patients. This was when I hired that consultant from Erie PA, and started Lonestar Dental my sleep medicine practice. On one hand this was a great decision. I probably would not be in sleep without this decision, but boy, was it ever expensive....



Harry Sugg & Michael Irvin

“ THE PRACTICE OF SLEEP APNEA DENTISTRY HAS TURNED OUT TO BE THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE SECOND HALF OF MY CAREER. ”

It took me 3 years of hard work to undo some of the damage and by focusing on the trail of breadcrumbs that were left behind, it was not a total loss. My hat is off to David Gergen, and Gergen's Orthodontics for leading me out of this very dark place. David suggested I focus on the Herbst appliance for my sleep patients. I took his advice and have treated hundreds of patients without a problem using the sleep Herbst by Gergen's. You should all start with this appliance.

I now am working with the local NFLPA and ProPlayer Health Alliance, I count some of the retired NFL guys as my personal friends. Roy Green, Derek Kennard, Eric Dickerson, Tony Dorsett, Michael Irvin, Preston Pearson and Mark Walczak have been very generous with their time and their efforts in helping me work with the retired NFL legends.

The practice of Sleep Apnea Dentistry has turned out to be the highlight of the second half of my career. If you are considering this area of practice I urge you to do two things.

1. Stay away from vendor training initially. Usually it is a thinly disguised sales pitch. Usually with a presenter who shows YouTube videos for 2/3 of the course. He seems to find them funny (or just ran out of material) but you are there to learn!

2. Join the ASBA to learn the basics and get a foundation to build your practice

AmericanSleepandBreathingAcademy.com