

# Researchers release global sleep apnoea study

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A SAVE study patient at one of Flinders University's sleep labs. The SAVE study was led by Flinders' Professor Doug McEvoy. Credit: Flinders University

The largest sleep study ever undertaken has found that the leading therapy for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), does not reduce recurrent strokes and heart attacks in people with cardiovascular disease – but does significantly improve their quality of life and severe depression.

Researchers from Flinders University and The George Institute for Global health, who published their findings in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, spent more than four years studying 2,700 people with OSA and [cardiovascular disease](#) from seven countries who used CPAP machines to manage their OSA.

Flinders University's Professor Doug McEvoy, who presented the findings at the European Society of Cardiology Conference today, said he was surprised that his team didn't find cardiovascular benefits from CPAP usage but he was particularly

encouraged by the significant impact on mood and reported wellbeing.

"We were surprised not to find a reduction in cardiovascular events from CPAP usage, however patients who used the machines for a minimum of three hours a night reported significant improvements in their wellbeing from their snoring, mood, quality of life and the amount of time they needed to take off work due to sickness," said Professor McEvoy.

"We knew that people who have OSA have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and wanted to see if we could help reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease by treating this sleep disorder. While we didn't show that, we believe our findings will be of great value to healthcare providers and encouraging news for tens of millions of OSA sufferers worldwide."

Co-author Professor Craig Anderson, from The George Institute for Global Health, said CPAP machines clearly improved the lives of people with [sleep disordered breathing](#).

"As well as raising the risk of having a heart attack or stroke, OSA causes a whole host of other problems such as lethargy, daytime napping, poor thinking, and impacts on relationships through excessive snoring," he said.

"We have shown that CPAP can help improve the lives of people with [obstructive sleep apnea](#), which is significant, and of real benefit to people who suffer from sleep disordered breathing.

More research is now needed on how to reduce the significant risk of suffering a [heart attack](#) or stroke for those who suffer from [sleep apnea](#)."

**More information:** R. Doug McEvoy et al. CPAP for Prevention of Cardiovascular Events in Obstructive Sleep Apnea, *New England Journal of*

Medicine (2016). [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1606599](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1606599)

Provided by Flinders University

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