

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Mood disorders in healthy elderly with obstructive sleep apnea: a gender effect

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PII: S1389-9457(15)02052-3
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi: 10.1016/j.sleep.2015.11.007>
Reference: SLEEP 2950

To appear in: *Sleep Medicine*

Received date: 1-9-2015
Revised date: 16-10-2015
Accepted date: 4-11-2015



Please cite this article as: Emilia Sforza, Magali Saint Martin, Jean Claude Barthélémy, Frédéric Roche, Mood disorders in healthy elderly with obstructive sleep apnea: a gender effect, *Sleep Medicine* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/doi: 10.1016/j.sleep.2015.11.007>.

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Original Article

Mood disorders in healthy elderly with obstructive sleep apnea: a gender effect

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Highlights

- A link between depression and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) has been described.
- We examined this association in a large group of healthy elderly with OSA.
- No association was found between indices of respiratory disorder and depression.
- Female gender was the strong predictor of depressive symptoms.

ABSTRACT

Objective: Previous studies have suggested an association between obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and anxiety and depression, but it remains unclear as to whether this is due to OSA or other factors. The aim of this study was to evaluate this association in a large sample of healthy elderly with unrecognized OSA.

Methods: 825 healthy elderly (aged ≥ 65 years) undergoing clinical, respiratory home polygraphic study and completion of questionnaires related to depression, anxiety and sleepiness were examined. According to the apnea–hypopnea index (AHI), the subjects were stratified into no-OSA, mild–moderate and severe OSA cases.

Results: Anxiety was present in 38% of the sample and depression in 8%. Anxiolytic treatment was reported by 9% of the population and antidepressant treatment in 5%. Women had high scores for anxiety and depression and they were more frequently taking anxiolytic and antidepressant medications. No differences were found for anxiety and depression scores and medication intake in the three groups of subjects stratified according to the AHI. Regression analyses adjusted for age, gender, body mass index, hypertension (HT), AHI and

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