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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**Volumetric evaluation of pharyngeal segments in obstructive sleep apnea patients** ☆,☆☆

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**KEYWORDS**

Upper airway;  
Obstructive sleep  
apnea;  
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**Abstract**

*Introduction:* Obstructive sleep apnea occurs by recurrent collapse of the upper airway during sleep, resulting in total (apnea) or partial (hypopnea) reduction of the airflow and has intimate relation with changes in the upper airway. Cone Beam CT allows the analysis of the upper airway and its volume by three-dimensional reconstruction.

*Objective:* To evaluate a possible correlation between the volume of the upper airway and the severity of the obstructive sleep apnea.

*Methods:* A retrospective study was performed reviewing polysomnographic data and Cone Beam CT records of 29 patients (13 males and 16 females). The correlation between the volume of the nasopharynx, the oropharynx and the total superior pharynx with the AHI was assessed by Pearson's rank correlation coefficient.

*Results:* The obstructive sleep apnea severity division was: ten patients had severe, 7 had moderate, 6 had mild and 6 of them were healthy. The correlation between the nasopharynx,

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the oropharynx and the total superior pharynx volumes and the Apnea-Hypopnea-Index was respectively:  $-0.415$  ( $p=0.025$ ),  $0.186$  ( $p=0.334$ ) and  $-0.329$  ( $p=0.089$ ). The Spearman's rank controlled by the Body Mass Index, the age and the gender was:  $-0.206$  ( $p=0.304$ ),  $-0.155$  ( $p=0.439$ ) and  $0.242$  ( $p=0.284$ ).

**Conclusion:** There is no correlation between the volume of the airway and the obstructive sleep apnea, assessed by Apnea-Hypopnea-Index and controlled by the Body Mass Index, the age and the gender. The volume of the upper airways as an isolated parameter did not correlate to the severity of the obstructive sleep apnea syndrome, and should be evaluated together with other factors.

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## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Via aérea superior;  
Apneia obstrutiva do sono;  
TC de feixe cônico

## Avaliação volumétrica de segmentos faríngeos em pacientes com apnéia obstrutiva do sono

### Resumo

**Introdução:** A Apneia Obstrutiva do Sono ocorre por colapso recorrente das vias aéreas superiores durante o sono, resultando em redução total (apnéia) ou parcial (hipopnéia) do fluxo aéreo, tendo relação estreita com alterações nas vias aéreas superiores. A TC de feixe cônico permite a análise da via aérea superior e seu volume através da reconstrução tridimensional.

**Objetivo:** Avaliar uma possível correlação entre o volume da via aérea superior e a gravidade da apneia obstrutiva do sono.

**Método:** Realizou-se um estudo retrospectivo, com revisão de dados polissonográficos e registros de TC de feixe cônico de 29 pacientes (13 do sexo masculino e 16 do sexo feminino). A correlação entre o volume total da nasofaringe, a orofaringe e a faringe superior com o IAH (Índice de Apneia-Hipopneia) foi avaliada pelo coeficiente de correlação de Pearson.

**Resultados:** A divisão por gravidade da Apneia Obstrutiva do Sono foi: dez pacientes apresentaram apneia na forma severa, 7 apresentaram apneia moderada, 6 tinham a forma leve e 6 estavam saudáveis. A correlação entre a nasofaringe, a orofaringe e os volumes da faringe superior e o Índice de Apneia-Hipopneia foram respectivamente:  $-0,415$  ( $p=0,025$ ),  $0,186$  ( $p=0,334$ ) e  $-0,329$  ( $p=0,089$ ). A classificação de Spearman controlada pelo Índice de Massa Corporal, idade e sexo foi:  $-0,206$  ( $p=0,304$ ),  $-0,155$  ( $p=0,439$ ) e  $0,242$  ( $p=0,284$ ).

**Conclusão:** Não há correlação entre o volume da via aérea e a apnéia obstrutiva do sono, avaliada pelo índice de apnéia-hipopnéia e controlada pelo índice de massa corporal, idade e sexo. O volume das vias aéreas superiores como parâmetro isolado não se correlacionou com a gravidade da síndrome da apneia obstrutiva do sono, e deve ser avaliado em conjunto com outros fatores.

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## Introduction

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is the main sleep respiratory disorder.<sup>1</sup> OSA is defined as a recurrent collapse of the upper airway during sleep, resulting in a total (apnea) or partial (hypopnea) reduction of the airflow.<sup>2</sup> Clinical findings include increased neck circumference, nasal obstruction, turbinate hypertrophy, septum abnormalities, flaccid palate, pharyngeal tonsils hypertrophy, macroglossia and oropharyngeal obstruction.<sup>3</sup> The risk factors associated with the apnea onset include male gender, Body Mass Index (BMI)  $>25$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>, low socioeconomic status, advanced age and menopause.<sup>4</sup> The airway patency is also reported as a determinant factor of the OSA. Obesity, edema and genetic

factors contribute its onset; as such situations may promote variations in the airway volume.<sup>3</sup> OSA prevalence in Western populations estimated that from 1% to 5% of the adults have OSA syndrome.<sup>1</sup>

The airway study in OSA patients has had an important advancement due to the use of the Cone-Beam Computed Tomography (CBCT), in association with 3D reconstruction software. That allows tridimensional airway evaluation, airway volume determination and detection of sites of maximum constriction.<sup>5</sup> These parameters are very important in the OSA evaluation. This is a disease that affects primarily the upper airway and then induces cardiovascular and metabolic alterations. The 3D airway evaluation can leave us to determine the different sites of obstruction and program

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