

Dental Sleep Medicine in Germany and Europe

Six years ago the German Society of Dental Sleep Medicine was founded by eight dentists. The initial idea was thought of in February 2000 by the former president of the German Society of Applied Sleep Medicine Nikolaus Netzer, MD, PhD, who started a workgroup on dental sleep medicine in his sleep society. Some months later in November 2000 this workgroup became an independent society named (Deutsche Gesellschaft Zahnärztliche Schlafmedizin, DGZS) and with own bylaws.

Since two of the DGZS founding members and board members (Susanne Schwarting and Ulrich Huebers) were ADSM members as well, the ADSM provided the organisation with a model to build up this sister society in Germany. Today I can report with more than a little pride that after six years we have established a therapeutic network of over 500 sleep disorders dentists across Germany. On our website <http://www.dgzs.de> patients and sleep physicians can find our DGZS members by using a zip code based online search function.

Every year an annual meeting takes place which comprises of an additional one-day introductory course to provide continuing education for our members. We have already begun certifying our members in our third year. This will ensure that dental sleep medicine in Germany will reach and maintain a high level of quality. The reimbursement of mandibular advancement devices by the German health insurance companies is still not easy to handle and is based on a case to case decision. To facilitate this process and to

establish oral appliance therapy as an effective treatment option in sleep-related breathing disorders the DGZS board is working on a position paper.

Our main intention is to foster the interdisciplinary collaboration between the sleep physicians and sleep disorders dentists. This has been difficult in the past as it was hard to convince the German sleep physicians about the usefulness of oral appliance therapy in sleep disordered breathing. We still have a long way to go. So in 2005 the DGZS board came up with a challenging idea to move dental sleep medicine forward. As the founding conference of the World Association of Sleep Medicine (WASM) was held in Berlin in October 2005, the DGZS set up a full day WASM satellite symposium on dental sleep medicine. This was organized as a joint symposium of our German Society of Dental Sleep Medicine and the European Dental Sleep Medicine Academy EdeSA. In the Berlin congress center we opened the doors of our meeting room and invited the international sleep physicians to step in and listen to our interesting lectures [program see *Sleep and Breathing* (2005) 9, 3:141-142]. As we had brilliant speakers (Kingman Strohl, Max Hirshkowitz and Robert Rogers from the US, Makoto Kikuchi from Japan, Marie Marklund from Sweden, Aarnoud Hoekema from the Netherlands, Miche De Meyer from Belgium and Edmund Rose from Germany) our symposium was a great success! And as a highlight of this great event the DGZS presented its first award to the sleep physician Professor Karlheinz Meier-Ewert, neurologist and psychiatrist, who pioneered the use of a mandibular advancement device in obstructive sleep apnea with his publications on the Esmarch device in the early eighties (article on the Meier-Ewert-Award in press, *Sleep and Breathing*).

This extraordinary Berlin symposium was a breakthrough in regards to the contact with the German Sleep Society. For October 2006, our DGZS and the German Sleep Society are planning the first joint symposium which will pave the way for future cooperation.

In Europe the DGZS has spread the word and contributed to the founding of further workgroups on dental sleep medicine in Great Britain, Italy and Austria. As we have many different countries and languages in Europe, we saw the need to set up a European Academy on Dental Sleep Medicine as a kind of mother society and founded the EdeSA in April 2004. EdeSA promotes and extends the knowledge of evidence based dental sleep medicine in European countries and unites experts from all over Europe who value quality dental sleep medicine to share, to teach and to practice the best treatment methods. EdeSA creates a network of colleagues who intend to work as part of the interdisciplinary team with expertise in the field of



Board of the German Society of Dental Sleep Medicine from the left: Ulrich Huebers, DDS, vice president; Susanne Schwarting, DDS, president; Markus Heise, DDS, secretary; Joerg Schlieper MD, DDS, treasurer; Andreas Hauschild, DDS, associate board member public relations

oral appliance therapy. On the board of this European Academy are Miche De Meyer and Jef Nelissen from Belgium, Marie Marklund and Anette Fransson from Sweden, Robert Jagger and Quentin Jones from Great Britain and Susanne Schwarting from Germany. The reader will notice that again ADSM members from other countries have been inspired by the ADSM to move dental sleep medicine ahead in their own countries.

In closing I would like to thank the ADSM for its excellent work during the past 14 years. It fosters professional exchange in the growing field of dental sleep medicine and spreads its expertise to dental sleep practitioners well beyond the borders of North America.

Susanne Schwarting, DDS, Germany

President of the German DGZS - <http://www.dgzs.de>

Secretary of the European EdeSA - <http://www.edesa.org>

Member of the American ADSM - <http://www.dentalsleepmed.org>