The Patient's Perioperative Perspective During the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea
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Themes

- **Influence of Patient Knowledge**
  - Lack of Knowledge of OSA
    - "I was totally unaware that there was an illness or a diagnosis called sleep apnea."
  - Taking OSA More Seriously
  - "I think he said that the primary thing is, I can't remember exactly what."

- **Impact on OSA**
  - "Oh I am sharper, I don't feel tired, what I felt like in the past is gone."
  - "I sleep well at night, I don't wake up in the middle of the night, I don't have headaches, I don't have heart palpitations and I am not irritable."
  - "I think surgery is a last resort and I think it for was because I was getting too tired and I was getting these headaches and I was just feeling I was not sleeping at all."
  - "I can't even remember having a dream in the last eight weeks on the surgery whereas before I used to dream and I still have obvious effects of sleep apnea."

- **Desire to Stop Using the CPAP Machine**
  - "I am not exempt or too good to get a sleep study."
  - "I saw some YouTube videos of some adults and [what] they were going through, it was really encouraging to see."

- **Desire to Repeat the OSA Surgery if Given a Choice**
  - "I think he said that he performed three things, I can't remember exactly what."
  - "Well I think the surgery again if given the choice."

- **Affect on Personal Life**
  - "I felt like I was the boy in the bubble."
  - "I think it's a mental thing for me. It's a mental thing for me so it's not going to work."

- **Affect on Professional Life**
  - "I couldn't stay awake at work, sometimes I would be sleeping and snoring, sitting up at my desk and I didn't even know how I survived."
  - "I found it difficult for my attention span… I would shut down and take naps and try to wake back up and try to figure out what I am doing."

- **Change in Job**
  - "I don't care if I am going to or going to through living hell..."
  - "...if the recovery wouldn't have discouraged me I really don't think I would have had it anyway."

- **Perioperative Pain Experiences**
  - "I have never experienced that kind of pain..."
  - "I felt like there is something down my throat. Like I stuck my finger down my throat...sometimes I still feel that."

Methods

After IRB approval, 50 patients were identified as having had palate surgery for OSA. The patients had (a) no sleep lab diagnosed obstructive sleep apnea, (b) have attempted to use the CPAP machine and (c) had palate surgery (uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, and z-plasty). In addition to palate surgery, some patients had additional procedures including inferior turbinectomy, septoplasty, and tongue base reduction. Patients were excluded if they did not speak English fluently.

After obtaining consent, one author (MR) interviewed the participants in person in a private office or over the phone. As the senior author/surgeon (PZ) was not involved in the interview process, the patients were free to be candid during the interviews. The semistructured interviews were approximately 20 minutes. Thematic saturation was reached at 17 patients and interviews were subsequently concluded. The results of the preoperative (17) and postoperative (22) studies were analyzed and recorded. These findings are reflective of this research sample and these data were not analyzed. Brief, significant segments of text were isolated as codes. Then related codes were grouped into overarching themes. Several features were taken to ensure data trustworthiness. Before the start of the study, both authors used bondwalks in order to identify their own biases. Member checking and investigator triangulation was also used to ensure data validity. In order to keep the essence of the patient experience, thick, rich descriptions were used in structural and textual descriptions.

References