

Lifestyles

SAVVY SENIOR

Jim Miller



Treatment for snoring seniors

Dear Savvy Senior,
My 60-year-old husband has become a terrible snorer, especially over the past few years. It's gotten to the point I can't stand to sleep in the same room as him anymore. What can help us?

Sleepless Sandy

Dear Sandy,
Most people don't think there's much they can do to fix their snoring problems, but that's not true anymore. Today, there are number of viable tips and treatments that can make a big difference for snorers and their suffering spouses. Here's what you should know.

Snoring is very common. If fact, it's estimated that nearly half of all adults in the U.S. snore at least occasionally, and 25 percent snore habitually. But men are the ones who tend to be loud problem snorers, as well as people who are overweight. And snoring often gets worse with age.

Self-Help Remedies

While there's no sure-fire cure for snoring, there are a variety of things your husband can try to help reduce or eliminate the problem, including:

- **Slim down:** If he's overweight, a 10 percent loss of body weight can help open up his airway and reduce snoring.
- **Stop smoking.** If your husband's a smoker, quitting will help. Smoking causes inflammation in the upper airways that can make snoring worse.
- **Avoid alcohol and sedatives:** Sleeping pills, painkillers, tranquilizers and alcoholic beverages all relax the muscles in the throat which makes snoring more likely. He should avoid all of these three to four hours before bed time.
- **Change sleeping positions:** Snoring is more common when you sleep on your back. To prevent this, sew a tennis ball in the back of a T-shirt or his pajama top. This will make sleeping on his back uncomfortable and teach him to sleep in a more breathing friendly side position. Or, buy a snoring pillow that's designed to promote side sleeping. The Sona Pillow (SonaPillow.com) and Sleepright Side Pillow (Amazon.com) are two popular brands.

- **Tilt the bed:** Raising the head of the bed by four inches can also help reduce snoring by helping him breath easier. He can do this by placing some bricks or boards under the headboard legs, or purchase some inexpensive bed raisers. Or insert a foam wedge under the head of the mattress.

- **Clear nasal passages:** If nasal congestion is causing your husband to snore, nasal strips such as Breathe Right may help, or if allergies are the cause, try steroid or saline nasal sprays. Antihistamines can help with allergies, but can worsen snoring. Also consider purchasing a humidifier for the bedroom. This can help to reduce congestion and moisturize the throat.

When to See a Doctor

Loud snoring can be a sign of obstructive sleep apnea (see SleepApnea.org), a serious condition in which the snorer stops breathing many times a night. Left untreated, it can cause high blood pressure and can sharply increase the risk for stroke and heart attack.

If your husband is frequently sleepy during the day, stops breathing during sleep, or snorts awake, gasping for breath, then it's time to see an otolaryngologist or a sleep specialist who may recommend an overnight study at a sleep center (SleepCenters.org). And even if he doesn't have these symptoms, these types of doctors can help ease his snoring if the other remedies have failed.

A common treatment for sleep apnea and severe snoring is a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) device. This involves sleeping with a snorkel-like mask that's hooked up to a machine that gently blows air up your nose to keep the passages open.

Other treatment options include an oral appliance that fits into the mouth over the teeth like a removable mouth guard or retainer. And the new Provent therapy (ProventTherapy.com), which are small nasal devices that attach over the nostrils to improve airflow and breathing.

Helping hands in Honduras

Dr. Rampp among group on mission trip to impoverished country

By JAMES CLARK
Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tenn.)

After seeing what little health care is available in the impoverished Central American country of Honduras, Dr. Randal Rampp says he is grateful for the high level of health care we enjoy in the United States.

Dr. Rampp was among a group of 45 people who made a mission trip to Honduras last month through Lipscomb University. His son, Bobby, is a junior pre-med student at Lipscomb, and fellow McMinnville resident Lacey Pack also made the trip.

"It was a human tragedy to see. We are truly blessed to live in the United States," said Rampp, who is chief medical officer at River Park Hospital. "It gives you a different perspective on health care, especially with the current health care reform that's taking place. It makes me see we take for granted the system we have here, which is the best health care system in the world."

Dr. Rampp and the group spent a week in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, which has a population around 1.2 million. The group included four physicians, four nurses, two pharmacists, one dentist, and several student translators.

Dr. Rampp said he was stunned at the widespread poverty that exists in Honduras. He said there is an elite upper class that is very wealthy and an overwhelming lower class that struggles to survive.

"None of them have access to health care," said Dr. Rampp. "One thing that struck me is we were there for a week and I never saw or heard an ambulance. We think about calling 911 if we have a medical emergency. They don't have that there. About the only way you're going to get to a hospital is if a family member drags you there."

The group operated free clinics at nine different locations in Tegucigalpa and saw around 1,200 patients. The clinics opened at 9 a.m. each day and Dr. Rampp said people began lining up around 5 a.m.

Enhancing the need for medical care during their trip was the fact the doctors in Honduras were on strike while the group was in the country. Dr. Rampp said doctors there are government employees who were apparently unhappy about their pay, thus the strike.

Common ailments of the Honduran people included scabies (bed bugs), high blood pressure, diabetes, and foot fungus due to all the people who are forced to go bare-footed. He said the people embraced the opportunity to have medical care. One lady went out and picked mangos to give them. No one had any money to pay for their services.

"There were several kids I saw who had ruptured ear drums," said Dr. Rampp. "That's pretty rare in this country because when a kid gets an earache, his parents take him to the doctor. But that doesn't happen there. The kids get an ear infection and it goes untreated and then it becomes a ruptured ear drum with infection draining down their face."

Dr. Rampp said there were about 10 girls he saw in the 12-14-year-old age range who were pregnant. He said the girls typically come from very large families and are sold at a young age to single men because their parents cannot afford to feed them. These single men often throw the girls out on the street when they are done with them.

He told the story of a 13-year-old girl who had been living at an orphanage for four months. Since she didn't have a change of



River Park Hospital chief medical officer Dr. Randal Rampp says his recent mission trip to Honduras was a moving experience. He is pictured with one of the hundreds of orphans who he provided medical care.



Medical personnel like Dr. Randal Rampp often received armed escorts during their stay in Honduras. Gang violence is frequent and there is also hostility between the lower class and the few people who are wealthy.



Many Hondurans live in makeshift houses and others live in cardboard boxes, according to Dr. Randal Rampp, who made a mission trip there last month.

clothes, she had worn the same clothes the entire four months.

"Some members of the group got together and we bought her some new clothes and some shoes," said Dr. Rampp.

One aspect of the mission trip Dr. Rampp found especially rewarding was the fact he could concentrate strictly on providing medical care. He said that allowed him to see about twice as many patients in a day as he would in the United States.

"I didn't have to call insurance companies to get prior approval or make referrals," said Dr. Rampp. "There is so much documentation and paperwork we have to do here and I didn't have to do any of that there. I could literally see double the amount of patients, about 60 a day, where the most I could ever see in a day here if I was in private practice would be about 30."

The mission trip to Honduras is organized by a Spanish professor at Lipscomb and it has been an annual trip for the past 15 years. Dr. Rampp said he is already making plans to go next year.



Bobby Rampp is a junior pre-med student at Lipscomb University. He made a mission trip to Honduras last year and talked his dad, Dr. Randal Rampp, into going this year.



Honduras is known for its sweltering heat and drought conditions. Many Hondurans get their drinking water from a river like this one.

They also bathe and wash their clothes in the same river.



Lipscomb University student Lacey Pack, a McMinnville resident, made the mission trip to Honduras and is pictured with an orphan there.