

## Speaking from Experience

### Sleep Disorders: Sleep apnea & insomnia

#### Transcript for Chapter 1 of 7: Diagnosis

**Robert, has sleep apnea:** The whole episode regarding sleep apnea started off because my wife complained about my snoring. This was about 15, maybe 20 years ago and she put up with it for quite a long time until eventually it was threatening... She said it was threatening our marriage.

**Daniel, has sleep apnea:** I went to a sleep doctor and he got me to fill out a questionnaire about how tired I am during regular daily activities – sitting at traffic lights, sitting in a doctor’s waiting room, that kind of thing – and it asked me how sleepy I became in those situations. And when I filled out that form, I began to realise that I probably had a serious problem. I was actually very tired most of the time.

**Jennifer, has insomnia:** It was a fairly major car crash and I sustained neck and arm and back injuries – all soft-tissue injuries – which made sleeping really difficult because I was in constant pain. My GP at the time put me on a fair number of pain medications and he kept increasing the different types of pain medication. And one of the things with a lot of pain medications is that they normally will actually put you to sleep, but the pain was so bad that I still wasn’t sleeping.

**Chris, has sleep apnea:** In the late 80s, I became... I was very exhausted and I ended up with what they call chronic fatigue.

**Tony, has sleep apnea:** When I was driving trucks and I had my own truck, I could still visualize exactly where I was and what I was doing. I was only a couple of kilometres away from my depot in Footscray, and I just remember I obviously must have dozed off and I remember waking up and the truck was heading towards a big telephone pole and I virtually just sort of turned at the last split second and saved myself. I remember that incident quite clearly from then till not, you know?

**Harry, has sleep apnea:** I went to the doctor and he seemed to think that I might have sleep apnea and sent me to a respiratory physician who said, “Yes...” He looked and said, yes, that was a likely outcome but they’d have to give me a sleep test. And I went into hospital and they put electrodes all round me. It was a very uncomfortable night. I don’t know if I slept very much. And they said, “Yes, you’ve got a pretty severe case of sleep apnea.”

**Joan, has sleep apnea:** I didn’t realise that I had a problem because I lived alone and no-one told me that I was... I didn’t snore very much, but I certainly would stop breathing. And that had affected me, in that twice I had walked out... walked out to cross the road without seeing a motorbike coming. And I was very, very lucky. I just was able to step back once and the second time my rucksack caught on the handles of a Harley-Davidson and luckily the strap fell off the bag. So that was that sort of inattention. And I had noticed that it was harder at work... I’d notice small things. I wasn’t falling asleep, but I was inattentive or I was

two moments missing, so I wasn't remembering things.

**Daniel:** As I understand it, sleep apnea is, trouble breathing when you're sleeping. I've been told that I get several episodes a night of an almost complete inability to breathe.

**Chris:** I went and had the overnight study. Now, I can't remember, but it was quite... It was moderate to severe.

**Jennifer:** It was a couple of years ago that, you know, having been through this period of sleeping, not sleeping, I ended up in a desperation asking my GP to refer me to a sleep psychologist. And I have to say that it was one of the best things that I did, 'cause I've learned a lot about sleep as a result. I now understand my body, my system a lot better, and, you know, if I'm not sleeping, I'm understanding why, and I know what I can do to try and maintain a good sleeping pattern and good sleep health, for want of a better phrase, I guess.

**Joan:** I joined the sleep disorders organisation. So I started reading about it, went... I worked in a library so I went and read about it. Not many people knew what it was whatsoever. But once I started on the CPAP, I was so well. I remember getting up at 7 o'clock and walking around my small suburb and getting back and still had time for breakfast.