

Developing a surgical snoring service in times of austerity

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INTRODUCTION

The British Snoring and Sleep Apnoea Association estimated that 41.5% of the UK adult population snore with a male: female ratio of 2.3:1.¹

Snoring is recognised to cause disruption of bed partners' sleep (with associated daytime tiredness, and decreased cognitive functioning), and eventual relationship disharmony.²

Treatment for simple snoring has traditionally been considered a 'cosmetic' activity with little funding allocated from commissioners. Therefore to develop a snoring service, particularly in times of austerity, poses significant challenges.

RESULTS

Results of the literature review indicated:

Patients with a high BMI are least likely to benefit from snoring surgery.^{3,4}

Patients with large tonsils generally benefited from excision, rather than be referred for snoring surgery. Commissioners were concerned that snoring surgery could potentially consume significant amount of funds unless there were robust exclusion and inclusion criteria.

Research data from studies performed in the ENT department found that some snoring therapies which required a local anaesthetic and minimal time off work had similar outcomes to more traditional procedures associated with significant morbidity and recovery periods).

A clear protocol was developed drawing upon the information gathered above. This was ratified by all those concerned, to the benefit of all, including the patients. This has proved to be a highly cost effective service for both primary and secondary care providers.

METHODS

Multimodal approach to developing service:

- Strong leadership and consensus collaboration between primary and secondary care
- Literature review of snoring treatments
- Negotiation with commissioners to understand possible objections
- Undertook research study to ascertain the quality of life benefit of different snoring surgery methods (resection vs ablation)

Key Message

Developing a successful service, particularly in times of financial hardship, requires sincere collaboration and strong leadership to produce an effective, lean service.

References

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