Dentistry, Nutrition and Sleep Apnea

By Arthur M. Strauss, DDS

The American Dental Association defines dentistry as:
"The evaluation, diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment (nonsurgical, surgical or related procedures) of diseases, disorders and/or conditions of the oral cavity, maxillofacial area and/or the adjacent and associated structures and their impact on the human body; provided by a dentist, within the scope of his/her education, training and experience, in accordance with the ethics of the profession and applicable law."

The anatomical relationship of the jaw, tongue and throat impacts both dynamic and static tongue position, which controls our airway size and shape, thus ease of breathing. This was the subject of my December 2011 *Your Health Magazine* article, "Managing Sleep Apnea by Managing Oral Function".

Air has a more immediate impact upon our survival than nutrition, weight control and exercise. How long can we survive without air? In this, and numerous other articles, it is shown how the relationship of the jaw, tongue and throat is something we deal with all the time, and is not limited to obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

The body functions are designed to manage airflow, its highest priority, through the fight or flight, adrenaline or stress response, what we refer to as stress. Stress hormones impact our body, mind and spirit anatomically, biochemically and physiologically to compensate for inadequate airflow, ultimately through rebalancing the jaw-tongue-throat structural relationship. For more detail on this subject see "Obstructive Sleep Apnea Reveals Dental Connection to Chronic Disease", March 2012 *Your Health Magazine*.

The interconnection between anatomy and the hormonal and nervous system, is the link to absorption, assimilation of nutrients, even cravings for sugar to provide the energy the body needs to compensate and, and through physical and mental activity, burn up excess adrenaline (stress) hormones it secreted.

The fight or flight response of increased heart rate, blood pressure and rapid shallow breathing, through stress hormones, improves nerve conduction and muscle contractions that provide the oxygen and nutrient flow to make this happen.

There is also an emotional connection of our stress response as our increased heart rate, the sensations of the "rhythm and tempo" of which characterize different medical diagnosis, ranging from states of mania to depression. For more detail on this subject see "Impaired Oral Function and Stress Beyond OSA", January 2013, *Your Health Magazine*.

Given the impact of stress on all chronic disease, one can see how anatomy and impaired oral function is likely the root cause of it all. This is best managed by understanding and improving our anatomy in order to facilitate oral function and ease of breathing.

Additional articles by Dr. Strauss are available at www.yourhealthmagazine.net.