



Dr. Atif Sohail, M.D., F.A.C.C., and Dahlia Ferilina, FNP-C (seated) head the medical team at Heart and Sleep Clinics of America.

Photo: Hasson Diggs

# Heart and Sleep Clinics of America

400 W. Arbrook, Suite 220 • (817) 419-7220 • heartandsleepclinics.com

**D**r. Atif Sohail started cardiology practice in 1999 under his family name "Ellahi Heart Clinic" and relocated in 2004 in the Arlington area. Heart and Sleep Clinics of America was founded in 2017 under the original clinic umbrella to improve public awareness of the connection between heart diseases and sleep apnea and their frequent coexistence, acknowledging the profound and irrepairable impact in the form of loss of life and disability if left undiagnosed and untreated.

**ABOUT THE STAFF:** Atif Sohail, MD, FACC, is board certified in general cardiology, interventional cardiology, and cardiac CT and has prior certifications in internal medicine and Nuclear Cardiology. After graduating from and training at King Edward medical college, a prestigious medical school in Lahore, Pakistan, Dr. Sohail relocated to Britain for postgraduate education. After several years of additional training and obtaining the membership of the Royal College, he moved to the U.S. to train in cardiology and went into clinical practice in 1999. He works with a dedicated team of highly trained nurse practitioners in close collaboration with other allied specialties.

**SPECIALTY AREAS:** This comprehensive cardiology practice offers state-of-the-art cardiovascular testing and treatment in both outpatient and in-hospital environments, performs home-based or in-lab sleep testing, and provides treatment in collaboration with allied specialties.

**PHILOSOPHY:** We provide comprehensive care of the cardiac patient with a personalized and simplified patient-centered approach utilizing a strong clinical foundation, a dedicated and caring team of workers, and the most optimum, appropriate and sensible utilization of testing and treatment modalities.

**WHAT MAKES THE PRACTICE SPECIAL:** Maintaining a very high index of suspicion for undiagnosed sleep apnea, given its high prevalence in cardiac patients, remains the hallmark of this practice. It keeps Dr. Sohail on the cutting edge of clinical care and is the basis of the practice's logo and slogan, "connecting the dots between heart and sleep."

"I had always had an interest in sleep apnea and heart diseases, and in the last decade this awareness had become much more acute as I tested and treated a large number of cardiac patients and found sleep apnea to be highly prevalent," Dr. Sohail says. "Furthermore, treatment resulted in dramatic clinical improvement."

He notes that drastic outcomes such as stroke, brain hemorrhage, heart attack, sudden death, uncontrolled blood pressure, and roadside accidents remain an important reason to maintain this dedicated and cutting-edge approach and to maintain this high suspicion and offer early sleep testing in people with heart disease and who are in at-risk categories. He also does cardiac evaluations in patients with established sleep apnea or in those suffering from symptoms highly suspect for acquiring sleep apnea.

# The link between healthy sleep and a healthy heart

**I**f you can't recall the last time you had a good night's sleep – we're talking restorative, healthy, wake up feeling refreshed sleep – you might not be just tired. You might be ill. If your day is routinely marked by symptoms such as exhaustion, lethargy, forgetfulness, irritability or brain fog, you could be suffering from a condition known as obstructive sleep apnea.

Further, you could be suffering from something far more serious.

Dr. Atif Sohail founded Heart and Sleep Clinics of America after years of studying the link between healthy sleep and a healthy heart. He made increasing observation that obstructive sleep apnea might be the culprit behind the aforementioned symptoms, which often suggest problems that go far beyond the simple ability to get a good night's sleep – straight to the heart.

"I wanted to develop a way to reach out to people and shed light on this important connection," Dr. Sohail says. "This became my mission: to find heart disease in sleep disorders and vice versa. Sleep apnea affects many different people in various walks of life and in different vocations. Sleep apnea affects 5 to 10 percent of people in the general population and 50 percent in heart patients, which is 10 fold higher."

## What is sleep apnea?

Sleep apnea is a common disorder in which there is obstruction to the airflow and pauses in breathing while sleeping. Breathing pauses can last up to several seconds and occur multiple times during sleep. Typically, normal breathing then starts again, sometimes with a loud snort or choking sound. Sleep apnea usually is a chronic (ongoing) condition that disrupts a person's sleep. As a result, the quality of sleep is poor, and causes fatigue, tiredness, and daytime sleepiness. Sleep apnea often goes undiagnosed. Doctors usually can't detect the condition during routine office visits. It requires a dedicated sleep study.

Obstructive sleep apnea is the most common type of sleep apnea. It manifests when the airway collapses or becomes blocked during sleep. This causes shallow breathing or breathing pauses. When you try to breathe, any air that squeezes past the blockage can cause loud snoring. Obstructive sleep apnea is more common in people who are overweight, but it can affect anyone.

Central sleep apnea is a less-common type of sleep apnea. This disorder occurs if the area of the brain that controls one's breathing doesn't send the correct signals to your breathing muscles. As a result, there is an interruption in breathing. Central sleep apnea can affect anyone. However, it is more common in people who have certain medical conditions or use certain medicines. Central sleep apnea can occur with obstructive sleep apnea or alone. Snoring typically doesn't happen with central sleep apnea. Some people have overlapping sleep apnea.

## Untreated sleep apnea

Sleep apnea has been clinically connected to reduced oxygen levels at night, high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, obesity, memory loss, diabetes, and daytime sleepiness. If it goes untreated it puts great pressure on the heart and raises blood pressure.

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to a heart attack or stroke and sudden death.

## A solution to your sleep apnea

When he was training in Great Britain, Dr. Sohail became interested in sleep apnea and its manifestations. This interest continued to build and culminated with the founding of Heart and Sleep Clinics of America, where he and his entire staff are dedicated to helping patients reach better health through the diagnosis and treatment of obstructive sleep apnea and heart disease. The process can begin with a simple test.

Dr. Sohail suggests that prospective patients monitor their routine to see if they experience any of the following symptoms:

- Loud snoring
- Observed episodes of breathing cessation during sleep
- Abrupt awakenings accompanied by gasping or choking
- Awakening with a dry mouth or sore throat
- Morning headache
- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Difficulty concentrating during the day
- Experienced mood changes, such as depression or irritability
- High blood pressure
- Nighttime sweating
- Decreased libido
- Heart rhythm irregularities
- Uncontrolled Diabetes
- History of Stroke
- Night shift workers
- Excessive use or craving for caffeine

If you suffer from one or more of these symptoms, Dr. Sohail encourages you to schedule an appointment today. It just might save your life!



**NOT ONLY DOES** obstructive sleep apnea rob you of much-needed restful slumber, it is associated with a host of potential life-threatening conditions, including cardio-vascular problems.