



PARTNERSHIP GROUP

Raising awareness of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea. **Together.**

PRESS RELEASE

MAKE UK ROADS SAFER - SUPPORT FAST TRACKING OF SLEEP DISORDER

03 November 2015 – In March, the OSA Partnership Group launched the Four Week Wait campaign to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on UK roads by calling for fast-tracked medical treatment of vocational drivers who have the condition obstructive sleep apnoea syndrome (OSAS).

On October 27 forklift truck driver Neil Urwin was jailed for two years for causing death by dangerous driving, after he hit cyclist Andy Charlton while driving in Northumberland in August 2014, despite being told the previous day that he should not be driving because he was suspected of having OSAS. He chose to disregard the advice from his doctor, and as a result the dangers of driving with this condition have been once again brought to light.

The OSA Partnership Group, a collective set up to raise awareness of the condition, has been campaigning to expedite treatment of vocational drivers with OSAS so that the maximum wait is no longer than four weeks. The condition is very treatable and the Group is aiming to make it easier for those who drive for a living, and who may have the condition, to come forward to receive treatment.

John Stradling, a member of the OSA Partnership Group and author of the campaign paper, comments, “The Andy Charlton story is another tragic example of how OSAS can impair driving ability with sometimes dire consequences. It is so important that doctors and patients take this condition more seriously, understand its impact, and provide or accept appropriate advice where necessary.

“In my experience vocational drivers are often the safest on our roads but those with OSAS have no control over their sleepiness. We also know that these drivers are reluctant to come forward with symptoms of OSAS for fear of losing their licence, and therefore their livelihood. This is why our campaign is so important in reducing the fear of seeking help and encouraging drivers to get the treatment that will allow them to drive safely (and considerably benefit their quality of life). In doing so, we can eliminate many unnecessary road traffic accidents, and ultimately reduce the number of serious injuries and fatalities such as Andy Charlton’s.”



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Commercial drivers and operators may be interested to learn that since the launch of the campaign, the Group has worked with the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) and consequently NICE has updated its Clinical Knowledge Summaries (CKS) to suggest that GPs who have patients presenting with symptoms of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea Syndrome (OSAS), where there is concern about job security, communicate with the local sleep centre to request diagnosis and treatment within four weeks.

John Stradling continues, "The decision by NICE to add this wording to the CKS scenario management is a very welcome first step towards eliminating the fear that drivers have of coming forward for treatment for OSAS. We would encourage any drivers, who visit their doctor with systems, to highlight this guidance. In the meantime, we shall continue to work with healthcare organisations and fleet operators to work towards achieving our goal of achieving a national standard to ensure that no vocational drivers has to wait more than four weeks for treatment."

RAC Business corporate sales director Jenny Powley, adds: "As a member of the OSA Partnership Group we have been firm supporters of the Four Week Wait campaign since its launch. The fact is the country and its economic development depends on the millions of commercial and fleet drivers that take to the roads every day, whether they are HGV drivers making deliveries or company car drivers attending sales meetings. "As such it is vital that all drivers are aware of the symptoms of this potentially devastating condition and have access to medical support and treatment as quickly as possible."

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The Four-Week Wait Campaign

A copy of the campaign paper can be located

<http://www.osapartnershipgroup.co.uk/campaign3-four-week-campaign.html>

What is Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)?

OSA is a condition that affects breathing *while you are sleeping*, due to partial or total closure of the airway behind the tongue. This:

- Disrupts your normal breathing pattern
- Causes your body to briefly wake up to restore normal breathing
- May prevent you from enjoying a good night's rest
- Is nearly always accompanied by loud snoring

OSAS is a more severe form of OSA where there is evidence of both a disruption of normal breathing patterns during sleep, *and* symptoms such as excessive sleepiness in the daytime. OSAS occurs in approximately a quarter of those with OSA.

If you suffer from OSAS, the pauses in breathing can happen hundreds of times a night, which most of the time you won't be aware of. This means you're getting less of the restorative kind of sleep required to enable you to work with the levels of energy and concentration needed to drive safely.

About the OSA Partnership Group

The OSA Partnership Group is made up of members with an interest in Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) representing clinicians, academics, fleet trade bodies, health and safety organisations and patient groups.



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The Group's objectives are to raise awareness of OSA and the availability of treatment to manage the symptoms, as well as the implications if the condition goes untreated, particularly in commercial drivers.

In addition to this campaign, the group has recently worked with the Freight Transport Association to develop a driver training module, the Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC), to explain what OSAS is, its risks and treatment.

<http://www.osapartnershipgroup.co.uk/what-is-osa.html>