



**Media Release**  
**March 21, 2005**  
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## **Hospital District Hosts Sleep Center Open House**

*Event highlights achievements, patient successes*

Eleven-year old Miguel Caracheo has snored since he was a baby. Every night, his parents took turns getting up to move him so he'd stop snoring— even if momentarily. They did this three to four times a night and thought nothing of it. That is until his mother noticed he stopped breathing.

Miguel was one of several guest speakers at an open house recently hosted by the Harris County Hospital District Sleep Disorders Center at Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, where he talked about his experience with the sleep center and how it is helping him.

Miguel began suffering from asthma more than a year ago. His mother, concerned he might have trouble breathing, would slip into his room at night and watch him while he slept— occasionally repositioning his head when needed to stop the snoring.

“I got very scared when he stopped breathing,” Rocio Caracheo recalls. “After a few seconds, he gurgled then started breathing again. I didn't know what to think— was it the asthma, was it the snoring?”

Miguel's doctor at Ben Taub General Hospital referred him to the hospital district's sleep center to seek treatment. The program, launched in 2004, is a collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine and The University of Texas Medical School.

“Sleep disorders are a very important issue,” said Dr. Diwakar Balachandran, medical director for the HCHD Sleep Disorders Center. “People who suffer from untreated sleep disorders are three times more likely to engage in a car or work-related accident, and two and a half times more likely to develop congestive heart failure.”

Prior to the sleep center's opening, HCHD referred roughly 500 patients like Miguel annually to other institutions for evaluation. Now, the hospital district internally treats an average of 100 sleep center patients monthly, saving between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per patient.

After undergoing tests in the sleep center, the next step for Miguel is to learn whether his sleep problems are triggering or aggravating his asthma, and for doctors to determine a treatment plan.

In some cases, a sleep study may identify a patient who has low oxygen levels at night, indicating more severe asthma. In these cases, a particular form of treatment is needed, according to Balachandran.

When Miguel was younger, the family thought it was humorous for a young child to snore as loud as an adult. As he got older, they all learned to live with it.

“Now we just want to know what’s causing it and hopefully find a way to stop it. We all look forward to being able to sleep without worrying,” Miguel’s mother said.

HCHD comprises three major hospitals including Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital and Quentin Mease Community Hospital; 12 community health centers; 13 satellite homeless shelter clinics; six school-based clinics and four mobile health units.

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