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Healthcare: a new, personalized support program for sleep apnea patients

press release

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Air Liquide's Healthcare Business

Air Liquide's Healthcare World Business Line serves over **6,000 hospitals** and **300,000 patients** throughout the world.

It provides **gases, hygiene products and medical equipment** to its hospital customers and **homecare** to patients in cities.

The Group's Healthcare business made **€1,700 million** in revenues in 2008, **63%** outside France with **7,800 employees**.

Homecare

Air Liquide contributes to the treatment of chronic illnesses such as **COPD** (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and **sleep apnea**. The Group has also extended its services to other chronic illnesses, such as **diabetes** in France. These treatments are being developed in addition to hospital care and at the same time allow patients a better **quality of life**, and local authorities to **reduce costs**.

National Sleep Day, organized March 18 by the *Institut National du Sommeil et de la Vigilance en France*, as part of **International Sleep Awareness Week**, is an opportunity to promote awareness of **sleep apnea**, a little known disorder which can lead to serious complications. **The disorder affects 1.5 million people in France, and 5% of the world's adult population. Eight out of 10 sleep apneics are unaware of their condition. Untreated sleep apnea multiplies by six the risk of road accidents and coronary accidents** and it can lead to numerous other disorders (diabetes, metabolic syndrome, depression, behavioral problems, etc.).

The standard treatment for sleep apnea is **Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)**, handled daily and in the patient's home. Air Liquide is a major global player in this field. In Europe, the Group provides services for 15% of all patients, working alongside their doctors. Air Liquide is strengthening its international position: after recent acquisitions in the Netherlands (Comcare Medical) and Tunisia (Air Separation), it has just opened its **first "sleep center" in China**, dedicated to the global care management of patients suffering from sleep apnea.

Nearly **250,000 apneics** in France have been treated. However, **around 20% of new patients stop treatment within the first six months. As a result, ensuring treatment is properly followed is a major public health issue.** Air Liquide conducted a clinical study in 2006 through its subsidiary **VitalAire**, in cooperation with **194 doctors and 674 patients**. The study showed the effectiveness of a phone support program for patients, resulting in a **significantly higher adherence to treatment (+8 points)** and **longer machine usage per night (+35 minutes)**.

For this reason, the Group, with VitalAire, is launching in France a **new, personalized support program for sleep apnea patients. Telephone support** by nurses, as well as **new educational tools** (a sleep diary, manual, patient DVD, etc.) created with the help of medical experts, will be proposed to doctors for their apneic patients, in addition to the traditional follow-up home visits by technicians. The aim is to **increase patients' motivation and compliance to make treatment more successful**.

Jean-Marc de Royere, Senior Vice-President in charge of the Healthcare World Business Line and a member of the Air Liquide Executive Committee, declared: *"Sleep apnea has become a major public health issue. Air Liquide worked from the start, with the best international specialists, at a comprehensive management of*

Treatment for sleep apnea by Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)

The patient **breathes in air** via a nasal mask, with the help of a medical device equipped with a small turbine. This “**pneumatic splint**” keeps the patient’s respiratory passages open, regulating breathing by correctly **oxygenating the blood** during sleep, improving sleep quality and the patient’s general health. Certain patients may have **difficulty maintaining CPAP treatment**, which can be restrictive. **Up to 20% of patients in France stop treatment within the first six months**, compared to 50% of patients in the United States.

Sleep apnea discussion panel live web airliquide.com

On March 23 from 7:00 pm to 7:45 pm, Air Liquide will organize from its Shareholders’ reception lounge a discussion panel dedicated to issues concerning sleep apnea.

It will gather a patient and a doctor and will be **broadcast live in French on the Group’s website**.

It will offer internet users the opportunity to pose questions to experts.

For more information:

www.airliquide.com

this disorder. The goal is to reach the best quality of life for patients at the lowest cost to the community. Key to achieving this is patient compliance.”

Air Liquide is the world leader in gases for industry, health and the environment, and is present in over **75 countries with 43,000 employees**. Oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and rare gases have been at the core of Air Liquide’s activities since its creation in 1902. Using these molecules, Air Liquide continuously reinvents its business, anticipating the needs of current and future markets. The Group innovates to enable progress, to achieve dynamic growth and a consistent performance.

Air Liquide combines many products and technologies to develop valuable applications and services not only for its customers but also for society. **Innovative technologies** that curb polluting emissions, lower industry’s energy use, recover and reuse natural resources or develop the energies of tomorrow, such as hydrogen, biofuels or photovoltaic energy... Oxygen for hospitals, homecare, fighting nosocomial infections...

A partner for the long term, Air Liquide relies on employee commitment, customer trust and shareholder support to pursue its vision of sustainable, competitive growth. The **diversity** of Air Liquide’s teams, businesses, markets and geographic presence provides a solid and sustainable base for its development and strengthens its ability to push back its own limits, conquer new territories and build its future.

Air Liquide explores the best that air can offer to preserve life, staying true to its sustainable development approach. In 2008, the Group’s revenues amounted to **€13.1 billion**, of which almost 80% were earned outside France. Air Liquide is listed on the Paris Euronext stock exchange (compartment A) and is a member of the CAC 40 and Dow Jones Euro Stoxx 50 indexes.