

Medical Policy



Title: **Surgical Treatment of Snoring and Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) Syndrome**

Related Policy: ▪ *Diagnosis and Medical Management of Obstructive Sleep Apnea Syndrome*

Professional

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Populations	Interventions	Comparators	Outcomes
Individuals: • With obstructive sleep apnea	Interventions of interest are: • Laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty	Comparators of interest are: • Continuous positive airway pressure • Conventional surgical procedures	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity

Populations	Interventions	Comparators	Outcomes
Individuals: • With obstructive sleep apnea	Interventions of interest are: • Tongue base suspension	Comparators of interest are: • Continuous positive airway pressure • Conventional surgical procedures	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity
Individuals: • With obstructive sleep apnea	Interventions of interest are: • Radiofrequency volumetric reduction of palatal tissues and base of tongue	Comparators of interest are: • Continuous positive airway pressure • Conventional surgical procedures	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity
Individuals: • With obstructive sleep apnea	Interventions of interest are: • Palatal stiffening procedures	Comparators of interest are: • Continuous positive airway pressure • Conventional surgical procedures	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity
Individuals: • With obstructive sleep apnea	Interventions of interest are: • Hypoglossal nerve stimulation	Comparators of interest are: • Conventional surgical procedures	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity

DESCRIPTION

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) syndrome is characterized by repetitive episodes of upper airway obstruction due to the collapse of the upper airway during sleep. For patients who have failed conservative therapy, established surgical approaches may be indicated. This evidence review addresses minimally invasive surgical procedures for the treatment of OSA. They include laser-assisted uvuloplasty, tongue base suspension, radiofrequency volumetric reduction of palatal tissues and base of tongue, palatal stiffening procedures, and hypoglossal nerve stimulation. This evidence review does not address conventional surgical procedures such as uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, hyoid suspension, surgical modification of the tongue, maxillofacial surgery, or adenotonsillectomy.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this evidence review is to determine whether the use of minimally invasive surgical procedures improve the net health outcome for patients being treated for obstructive sleep apnea.

BACKGROUND

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is characterized by repetitive episodes of upper airway obstruction due to the collapse and obstruction of the upper airway during sleep. The hallmark symptom of OSA is excessive daytime sleepiness, and the typical clinical sign of OSA is snoring, which can abruptly cease and be followed by gasping associated with a brief arousal from sleep. The snoring resumes when the patient falls back to sleep, and the cycle of snoring/apnea/arousal may be repeated as frequently as every minute throughout the night. Sleep fragmentation associated with the repeated arousal during sleep can impair daytime activity. For example, adults with OSA-associated daytime somnolence are thought to be at higher risk for accidents involving motorized vehicles (i.e., cars, trucks, heavy equipment). OSA in children may result in

neurocognitive impairment and behavioral problems. In addition, OSA affects the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems. For example, apnea leads to periods of hypoxia, alveolar hypoventilation, hypercapnia, and acidosis. This, in turn, can cause systemic hypertension, cardiac arrhythmias, and cor pulmonale. Systemic hypertension is common in patients with OSA. Severe OSA is associated with decreased survival, presumably related to severe hypoxemia, hypertension, or an increase in automobile accidents related to overwhelming sleepiness.

Terminology and diagnostic criteria for OSA are shown in Table 1

Table 1. Terminology and Definitions for Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Terms	Definitions
Respiratory Event	
Apnea	The frequency of apneas and hypopneas is measured from channels assessing oxygen desaturation, respiratory airflow, and respiratory effort. In adults, apnea is defined as a drop in airflow by $\geq 90\%$ of the pre-event baseline for at least 10 seconds. Due to faster respiratory rates in children, pediatric scoring criteria define an apnea as ≥ 2 missed breaths, regardless of its duration in seconds.
Hypopnea	Hypopnea in adults is scored when the peak airflow drops by at least 30% of pre-event baseline for at least 10 seconds in association with either at least 3% or 4% decrease in arterial oxygen desaturation (depending on the scoring criteria) or arousal. Hypopneas in children are scored by a $\geq 50\%$ drop in nasal pressure and either a $\geq 3\%$ decrease in oxygen saturation or associated arousal.
RERA	Respiratory event-related arousal is defined as an event lasting at least 10 seconds associated with flattening of the nasal pressure waveform and/or evidence of increased respiratory effort, terminating in arousal but not otherwise meeting criteria for apnea or hypopnea
Respiratory event reporting	
Apnea/Hypopnea Index (AHI)	The average number of apneas or hypopneas per hour of sleep
Respiratory Disturbance Index (RDI)	The respiratory disturbance index is the number of apneas, hypopneas, or respiratory event-related arousals per hour of sleep time. RDI is often used synonymously with the AHI.
Respiratory event index (REI)	The respiratory event index is the number of events per hour of monitoring time. Used as an alternative to AHI or RDI in-home sleep studies when actual sleep time from EEG is not available.
Diagnosis	
Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)	Repetitive episodes of upper airway obstruction due to the collapse and obstruction of the upper airway during sleep
Mild OSA	In adults: AHI of 5 to < 15 . In children: AHI ≥ 1 to 5
Moderate OSA	AHI of 15 to < 30 . Children: AHI of > 5 to 10
Severe OSA	Adults: AHI ≥ 30 . Children: AHI of > 10
Treatment	

Terms	Definitions
Positive airway pressure (PAP)	Positive airway pressure may be continuous (CPAP) or auto-adjusting (APAP) or Bi-level (Bi-PAP).
PAP Failure	Usually defined as an AHI greater than 20 events per hour while using PAP
PAP Intolerance	PAP use for less than 4 h per night for 5 nights or more per week, or refusal to use CPAP. CPAP intolerance may be observed in patients with mild, moderate, or severe OSA

OSA: obstructive sleep apnea; PSG : Polysomnographic

REGULATORY STATUS

The regulatory status of minimally invasive surgical interventions is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Minimally Invasive Surgical Interventions for Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Interventions	Devices (predicate or prior name)	Manufacturer (previous owner)	Indication	PMA/ 510(k)	Year	FDA Product Code
LAUP	Various					
Radiofrequency ablation	Somnoplasty®		Simple snoring and for the base of the tongue for OSA	K982717	1998	GEI
Palatal Implant	Pillar® Palatal Implant	Pillar Palatal (Restore Medical/ Medtronic)	Stiffening the soft palate which may reduce the severity of snoring and incidence of airway obstructions in patients with mild-to-moderate OSA	K040417	2004	LRK
Tongue base suspension	AIRvance® (Repose)	Medtronic	OSA and/or snoring. The AIRvance™ Bone Screw System is also suitable for the performance of a hyoid suspension	K122391	1999	LRK
	Encore™ (PRELUDE III)	Siesta Medical	Treatment of mild or moderate OSA and/or snoring	K111179	2011	ORY
Hypoglossal nerve stimulation	Inspire® II Upper Airway Stimulation	Inspire Medical Systems	Patients ≥ 18 years with AHI ≥15 and ≤65 who have failed (AHI >15 despite CPAP usage) or cannot tolerate (<4 h use per night for ≥5 nights per week) CPAP and do not have complete concentric collapse at the soft palate level.	P130008, S039	2014	MNQ

Interventions	Devices (predicate or prior name)	Manufacturer (previous owner)	Indication	PMA/ 510(k)	Year	FDA Product Code
			Patients between ages 18 and 21 should also be contraindicated for or not effectively treated by adenotonsillectomy.			
Hypoglossal nerve stimulation	aura6000®	ImThera Medical		IDE	2014	
Hypoglossal nerve stimulation	Genio™	Nyxo		European CE Mark	2019	
Hypoglossal nerve stimulation	Apnex System®	Apnex				

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; CPAP: continuous positive airway pressure; IDE: investigational device exemption; LAUP: Laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea.

The expanded indication for hypoglossal nerve stimulation in patients age 18 to 21 was based on patients with Down Syndrome and is contingent on a post-approval study of the Inspire® UAS in this age group. The post-approval study will be a multicenter, single-arm, prospective registry with 60 pediatric patients age 18 to 21. Visits will be scheduled at pre-implant, post-implant, 6 months, and yearly thereafter through 5 years.

POLICY

- A. Palatopharyngoplasty (e.g., uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, uvulopharyngoplasty, uvulopalatal flap, expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty, lateral pharyngoplasty, palatal advancement pharyngoplasty, relocation pharyngoplasty) may be considered **medically necessary** for the treatment of clinically significant obstructive sleep apnea syndrome (OSA) in appropriately select adults who have failed an adequate trial of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:
1. Apnea/Hypopnea Index (AHI) or Respiratory Disturbance Index (RDI) of 15 or more events per hour, **OR**
 2. AHI or RDI of at least 5 events per hour with one or more signs or symptoms associated with OSA (e.g., excessive daytime sleepiness, hypertension, cardiovascular heart disease, or stroke).
- B. Hyoid suspension, surgical modification of the tongue, and/or maxillofacial surgery, including mandibular-maxillary advancement (MMA), may be considered **medically necessary** in appropriately selected adults with clinically significant OSA and objective documentation of hypopharyngeal obstruction who have failed an adequate trial of CPAP (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:
1. AHI or RDI of 15 or more events per hour, **OR**
 2. AHI or RDI of at least 5 events per hour with one or more signs or symptoms associated with OSA (e.g., excessive daytime sleepiness, hypertension, cardiovascular heart disease, or stroke).
- C. Adenotonsillectomy may be considered **medically necessary** in pediatric patients with clinically significant OSA and hypertrophic tonsils. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those pediatric patients who have:
1. AHI or RDI of at least 5 per hour, **OR**
 2. AHI or RDI of at least 1.5 per hour in a patient with excessive daytime sleepiness, behavioral problems, or hyperactivity.
- D. Hypoglossal nerve stimulation may be considered **medically necessary** in adults with OSA under the following conditions:
1. Age ≥ 22 years; **AND**
 2. AHI ≥ 15 with less than 25% central apneas; **AND**
 3. CPAP failure (residual AHI ≥ 15 or failure to use CPAP ≥ 4 hours per night for ≥ 5 nights per week) or inability to tolerate CPAP; **AND**
 4. Body mass index ≤ 32 kg/m²; **AND**
 5. Non-concentric retropalatal obstruction on drug-induced sleep endoscopy (see Policy Guidelines).

- E. Hypoglossal nerve stimulation may be considered **medically necessary** in adolescents or young adults with Down's syndrome and OSA under the following conditions:
1. Age 10 to 21 years; **AND**
 2. AHI >10 and <50 with less than 25% central apneas after prior adenotonsillectomy; **AND**
 3. Have either tracheotomy or be ineffectively treated with CPAP due to noncompliance, discomfort, undesirable side effects, persistent symptoms despite compliance use, or refusal to use the device; **AND**
 4. Body mass index $\leq 95^{\text{th}}$ percentile for age; **AND**
 5. Non-concentric retropalatal obstruction on drug-induced sleep endoscopy (see Policy Guidelines).
- F. Surgical treatment of OSA that does not meet the criteria above would be considered **not medically necessary**.
- G. The following minimally-invasive surgical procedures are considered **experimental / investigational** for the sole or adjunctive treatment of OSA or upper airway resistance syndrome (UARS):
1. Radiofrequency volumetric tissue reduction of the tongue, with or without radiofrequency reduction of the palatal tissues
 2. Laser-assisted palatoplasty (LAUP) or radiofrequency volumetric tissue reduction of the palatal tissues
 3. Palatal stiffening procedures including, but not limited to, cautery-assisted palatal stiffening operation, injection of a sclerosing agent, and the implantation of palatal implants
 4. Tongue base suspension
 5. All other minimally-invasive surgical procedures not described above.
- H. Implantable hypoglossal nerve stimulators are considered **experimental / investigational** for all indications other than listed above.
- I. All interventions, including LAUP, radiofrequency volumetric tissue reduction of the palate, or palatal stiffening procedures, are considered **not medically necessary** for the treatment of snoring in the absence of documented OSA; snoring alone is not considered a medical condition.

Policy Guidelines

1. CPAP is the preferred first-line treatment for most patients. A smaller number of patients may use oral appliances as a first line treatment.
2. The AHI is the total number of events (apnea or hypopnea) per hour of recorded sleep. The RDI is the total number of events (apnea or hypopnea) per hour of recording time. An obstructive apnea is defined as at least a 10-second cessation of respiration associated with

ongoing ventilatory effort. Hypopnea is defined as an abnormal respiratory event lasting at least 10 seconds with at least a 30% reduction in thoracoabdominal movement or airflow compared with baseline, and with at least a 4% oxygen desaturation.

3. The hypoglossal nerve (cranial nerve XII) innervates the genioglossus muscle. Stimulation of the nerve causes anterior movement and stiffening of the tongue and dilation of the pharynx. Hypoglossal nerve stimulation reduces airway collapsibility and alleviates obstruction at both the level of the soft palate and tongue base.
4. Drug-induced sleep endoscopy (DISE) replicates sleep with an infusion of propofol. DISE will suggest either a flat, anterior-posterior collapse or complete circumferential oropharyngeal collapse. Concentric collapse decreases the success of hypoglossal nerve stimulation and is an exclusion criteria from the Food and Drug Administration.
5. A trial of CPAP is defined as utilization for 60 days or greater.

RATIONALE

This evidence review has been updated regularly with searches of the PubMed database. The most recent literature update was performed through April 26, 2021.

This review was informed by TEC Assessments on surgical management and radiofrequency volumetric tissue reduction for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).^{1,2}

Evidence reviews assess the clinical evidence to determine whether the use of a technology improves the net health outcome. Broadly defined, health outcomes are the length of life, quality of life, and ability to function—including benefits and harms. Every clinical condition has specific outcomes that are important to patients and managing the course of that condition. Validated outcome measures are necessary to ascertain whether a condition improves or worsens; and whether the magnitude of that change is clinically significant. The net health outcome is a balance of benefits and harms.

To assess whether the evidence is sufficient to draw conclusions about the net health outcome of a technology, 2 domains are examined: the relevance and the quality and credibility. To be relevant, studies must represent 1 or more intended clinical use of the technology in the intended population and compare an effective and appropriate alternative at a comparable intensity. For some conditions, the alternative will be supportive care or surveillance. The quality and credibility of the evidence depend on study design and conduct, minimizing bias and confounding that can generate incorrect findings. The randomized controlled trial (RCT) is preferred to assess efficacy; however, in some circumstances, nonrandomized studies may be adequate. RCTs are rarely large enough or long enough to capture less common adverse events and long-term effects. Other types of studies can be used for these purposes and to assess generalizability to broader clinical populations and settings of clinical practice.

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA

Clinical Context and Therapy Purpose

OSA is associated with a heterogeneous group of anatomic variants producing obstruction. The normal pharyngeal narrowing may be accentuated by anatomic factors, such as a short, fat “bull” neck, elongated palate and uvula, and large tonsillar pillars with redundant lateral pharyngeal wall mucosa. In addition, OSA is associated with obesity. OSA may also be associated with craniofacial abnormalities, including micrognathia, retrognathia, or maxillary hypoplasia.

Obstruction anywhere along the upper airway can result in apnea. The severity and type of obstruction may be described with the Friedman staging system.³ Nonsurgical treatment for OSA or upper airway resistance syndrome includes continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) or mandibular repositioning devices. Patients who fail conservative therapy may be evaluated for surgical treatment of OSA.

Traditional surgeries for OSA or upper airway resistance syndrome include uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP) and a variety of maxillofacial surgeries such as mandibular-maxillary advancement. UPPP involves surgical resection of the mucosa and submucosa of the soft palate, tonsillar fossa, and the lateral aspect of the uvula. The amount of tissue removed is individualized for each patient, as determined by the potential space and width of the tonsillar pillar mucosa between the 2 palatal arches. UPPP enlarges the oropharynx but cannot correct obstructions in the hypopharynx. Patients who have minimal hypoglossal obstruction have greater success with UPPP. Patients who fail UPPP may be candidates for additional procedures, depending on the site of obstruction. Additional procedures include hyoid suspensions, maxillary and mandibular osteotomies, or modification of the tongue. Drug-induced sleep endoscopy and/or cephalometric measurements have been used as methods to identify hypopharyngeal obstruction in these patients. The first-line treatment in children is usually adenotonsillectomy. Minimally invasive surgical approaches are being evaluated for OSA in adults.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: Do the surgical interventions addressed in this evidence review improve the net health outcome in patients with OSA?

The following PICO was used to select literature to inform this review.

Populations

The population of interest is patients with OSA who have failed or are intolerant of positive airway pressure. Indications for the various procedures are described in Table 3 and in the Regulatory Status section.

Interventions

The interventions addressed in this review are laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty (LAUP), radiofrequency (RF) volumetric reduction of palatal tissues and base of tongue, palatal stiffening procedures, tongue base suspension, and hypoglossal nerve stimulation (HNS) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Minimally Invasive Surgical Interventions for OSA

Interventions	Devices	Description	Key Features	Indications
LAUP	Various	Superficial palatal tissues are sequentially reshaped over 3 to 7 sessions using a carbon dioxide laser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the uvula and associated soft-palate tissues are reshaped • Does not alter tonsils or lateral pharyngeal wall tissues • Tissue ablation can be titrated 	Snoring with or without OSA
RF volumetric reduction of palatal tissues	Somnoplasty	Radiofrequency is used to produce thermal lesions within the tissues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to LAUP • Can include soft palate and base of tongue 	Simple snoring and base of tongue OSA

Interventions	Devices	Description	Key Features	Indications
and base of tongue				
Palatal Implant	Pillar Palatal Implant	Braided polyester filaments that are implanted submucosally in the soft palate	Up to 5 implants may be used	Snoring
Tongue base suspension	AIRvance Encore	A suture is passed through the tongue and fixated with a screw to the inner side of the mandible, below the tooth roots	The suspension aims to make it less likely for the base of the tongue to prolapse during sleep	Snoring and/or OSA
Hypoglossal nerve stimulation	Inspire II Upper Airway Stimulation	Stimulation of the hypoglossal nerve which contracts the tongue and some palatal tissue	The device includes an implanted stimulator and a sensor implanted in the ribs to detect respiration.	A subset of patients with moderate-to-severe OSA who have failed or cannot tolerate CPAP (see Regulatory Status section)

CPAP: positive airway pressure; LAUP: laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea; RF: radiofrequency.

Comparators

The following therapies and practices are currently being used to treat OSA:

For patients with mild OSA who are intolerant of CPAP, the comparator would be oral appliances or an established upper airway surgical procedure.

For patients with moderate-to-severe OSA who have failed CPAP or are intolerant of CPAP, the comparator would be conventional surgical procedures such as maxillofacial surgeries that may include UPPP, hyoid suspensions, maxillary and mandibular osteotomies, and modification of the tongue. UPPP may be modified or combined with a tongue base procedure such as uvulopalatopharyngoglossoplasty, depending on the location of the obstruction. It is uncertain whether UPPP variants without tongue volume reduction are the most appropriate comparator for HNS, since the procedures may address different sources of obstruction.

Outcomes

Established surgical procedures are associated with adverse events such as dysphagia. In addition, the surgical procedures are irreversible should an adverse event occur. Therefore, an improvement in effectiveness and/or a decrease in adverse events compared with standard surgical procedures would be the most important outcomes.

The outcomes measure used to evaluate treatment success are a decrease in Apnea/Hypopnea Index (AHI) and Oxygen Desaturation Index on polysomnography (PSG) and improvement in a

measure of sleepiness such as the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) or Functional Outcomes of Sleep Questionnaire (FOSQ) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Health Outcome Measures Relevant to OSA

Outcome	Measure (Units)	Description	Clinically Meaningful Difference(If Known)
Change in AHI	AHI	Mean change in AHI from baseline to post-treatment	Change from severe to moderate or mild OSA
AHI Success	Percentage of patients achieving success.	Studies may use different definitions of success; the most common definition of AHI success is the Sher criteria	Sher criteria is a decrease in AHI $\geq 50\%$ and an AHI < 20 . Alternative measures of success may be AHI < 15 , < 10 , or < 5
Oxygen Desaturation Index	Oxygen levels in the blood during sleep	The number of times per hour of sleep that the blood oxygen level drops by ≥ 4 percentage points	More than 5 events per hour
Snoring	10-point visual analog score	Filled out by the bed partner to assess snoring intensity or frequency	There is no standard for a good outcome. Studies have used a 50% decrease in VAS ³ or final VAS of < 5 or < 3 ⁴ .
Epworth Sleepiness Score	Scale from 0 to 24	The ESS is a short self-administered questionnaire that asks patients how likely they are to fall asleep in 8 different situations such as watching TV, sitting quietly in a car, or sitting and talking to someone	An ESS of ≥ 10 is considered excessively sleepy. The MCID has been estimated at -2 to -3. ⁵
Functional Outcomes of Sleep Questionnaire	30 questions	Disease-specific quality of life questionnaire that evaluates functional status related to excessive sleepiness	A score of ≥ 18 is the threshold for normal sleep-related functioning, and a change of ≥ 2 points is considered to be a clinically meaningful improvement
OSA-18	18 item survey graded from 1 to 7	Validated survey to assess the quality of life in children	Change score of 0.5 to 0.9 is a small change, 1.0 to 1.4 a moderate change, and 1.5 a large change

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Score; MCID: minimum clinically important difference; VAS: visual analog score.

The effect of surgical treatment of OSA should be observed on follow-up PSG that would be performed from weeks to months after the surgery. Longer-term follow-up over 2 years is also needed to determine whether the effects of the procedure are durable or change over time.

Study Selection Criteria

Methodologically credible studies were selected using the following principles:

- To assess efficacy outcomes, comparative controlled prospective trials were sought, with a preference for RCTs;

- In the absence of such trials, comparative observational studies were sought, with a preference for prospective studies.
- To assess long-term outcomes and adverse events, single-arm studies that capture longer periods of follow-up and/or larger populations were sought.
- Studies with duplicative or overlapping populations were excluded.

REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

Laser-Assisted Uvulopalatoplasty

LAUP is proposed as a treatment of snoring with or without associated OSA. LAUP cannot be considered an equivalent procedure to the standard UPPP, with the laser simply representing a surgical tool that the physician may opt to use. LAUP is considered a unique procedure, which raises its own issues of safety and, in particular, effectiveness.

One RCT (Ferguson et al, 2003) on LAUP has been identified.⁶ This trial compared LAUP with no treatment, finding treatment success (AHI <10) to be similar between LAUP (24%) and no treatment controls (17%) (see Tables 5 and 6). The primary benefit of LAUP was on snoring as rated by the bed partner. Subjective improvements in ESS and quality of life were not greater in the LAUP group in this nonblinded study (see Tables 7 and 8). Adverse events of the treatment included moderate-to-severe pain and bleeding in the first week and difficulty swallowing at follow-up.

Table 5. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Characteristics

Study	Countries	Sites	Participants	Interventions ¹	
				Active	Comparator
Ferguson et al (2003) ⁶	Canada	1	46 patients with mild-to-moderate symptomatic OSA (AHI of 10 to 25) and loud snoring	21 patients treated with LAUP every 1-2 mo ¹	25 patients received no treatment

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; LAUP: laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty.

¹The LAUP procedure was repeated at 1- to 2-month intervals until either the snoring was significantly reduced, no more tissue could safely be removed, or the patient refused further procedures. There was a mean of 2.4 procedures (range, 1-4).

Table 6. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Results

Study	Treatment Success (AHI <10)	Change in Snoring (10-point VAS)	Change in ESS	Change in SAQLI Quality of Life	Moderate-to-Severe Pain in First Week	Bleeding in the First Week	Difficulty Swallowing at Follow-up
Ferguson et al (2003) ⁶							
N	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
LAUP	24%	-4.4	-1.4	+0.4	81%	19%	19%
No treatment	17%	-0.4	+0.8	+0.2			
p	NR	<0.001	NS	NS			

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Scale (maximum of 24); LAUP: laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty; *NS*: not significant; *NR*: not reported; SAQLI: Sleep Apnea Quality of Life Index (maximum of 7); VAS: visual analog scale.

Study limitations are described in Tables 7 and 8. The major flaw is the uncertain clinical significance of the outcome measure.

Table 7. Study Relevance Limitations

Study	Population ^a	Intervention ^b	Comparator ^c	Outcomes ^d	Follow-Up ^e
Ferguson et al (2003) ⁶ ,	1. Entry criteria include populations with mild OSA (AHI between 10 and 15) for whom an improvement to AHI <10 is not clinically significant		3. Controls had no treatment	6. The definition of success (AHI <10) combined with the eligibility criteria (AHI >10) can lead to clinically insignificant improvements being labeled success	

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea.

^a Population key: 1. Intended use population unclear; 2. Clinical context is unclear; 3. Study population is unclear; 4. Study population not representative of intended use.

^b Intervention key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Version used unclear; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as comparator; 4. Not the intervention of interest.

^c Comparator key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Not standard or optimal; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as intervention; 4. Not delivered effectively.

^d Outcomes key: 1. Key health outcomes not addressed; 2. Physiologic measures, not validated surrogates; 3. No CONSORT reporting of harms; 4. Not establish and validated measurements; 5. Clinical significant difference not prespecified; 6. Clinical significant difference not supported.

^e Follow-Up key: 1. Not sufficient duration for benefit; 2. Not sufficient duration for harms.

Table 8. Study Design and Conduct Limitations

Study	Allocation ^a	Blinding ^b	Selective Reporting ^d	Data Completeness ^e	Power ^d	Statistical ^f
Ferguson et al (2003) ⁶ ,		1.-3. No blinding				4. Comparison of primary outcome not reported

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Allocation key: 1. Participants not randomly allocated; 2. Allocation not concealed; 3. Allocation concealment unclear; 4. Inadequate control for selection bias.

^b Blinding key: 1. Not blinded to treatment assignment; 2. Not blinded outcome assessment; 3. Outcome assessed by treating physician.

^c Selective Reporting key: 1. Not registered; 2. Evidence of selective reporting; 3. Evidence of selective publication.

^d Follow-Up key: 1. High loss to follow-up or missing data; 2. Inadequate handling of missing data; 3. High number of crossovers; 4. Inadequate handling of crossovers; 5. Inappropriate exclusions; 6. Not intent to treat analysis (per protocol for noninferiority trials).

^e Power key: 1. Power calculations not reported; 2. Power not calculated for primary outcome; 3. Power not based on clinically important difference.

^f Statistical key: 1. Intervention is not appropriate for outcome type: (a) continuous; (b) binary; (c) time to event; 2.

Intervention is not appropriate for multiple observations per patient; 3. Confidence intervals and/or p values not reported; 4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated.

Section Summary: Laser-Assisted Uvulopalatoplasty

A single RCT has been identified on LAUP for the treatment of mild-to-moderate OSA. LAUP improved snoring as reported by the bed partner, but did not improve treatment success in terms of AHI when compared with no treatment controls. Patients in this nonblinded study did not report an improvement in ESS or quality of life after LAUP.

Radiofrequency Volumetric Reduction of Palatal Tissues and Base of Tongue

RF is used to produce thermal lesions within the tissues rather than using a laser to ablate the tissue surface. In some situations, RF of the soft palate and base of tongue are performed together as a multilevel procedure.

The analysis of RF volumetric tissue reduction was informed by a TEC Assessment (2000) that evaluated 4 primary studies on palatal radiofrequency ablation (RFA) and 1 study on tongue base RFA.¹ All studies were nonrandomized.

Randomized Controlled Trials

Two RCTs have subsequently been identified on RF volumetric reduction of the palate and tongue. One of the trials (Back et al, 2009) gave a single RF treatment to palatal tissues and found no statistical difference in scores on the AHI, VAS for snoring, ESS, or FOSQ between RF and sham (see Tables 9-11).⁷ The second trial (Woodson et al, 2003), provided a mean of 4.8 sessions of RF to the tongue and palate. This trial found a statistically significant improvement from baseline to posttreatment for ESS and FOSQ. However, the improvement in the FOSQ score (1.2; standard deviation, 1.6) was below the threshold of 2.0 for clinical significance and the final mean score in ESS was 9.8, just below the threshold for excessive sleepiness. AHI decreased by 4.5 events per hour, which was not statistically or clinically significant. The statistical significance of between-group differences was not reported (see Table 12).

Table 9. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Characteristics

Study	Countries	Sites	Participants	Interventions	
				Active	Comparator
Back et al (2009) ⁷	Finland	1	32 patients with symptomatic mild OSA and habitual snoring with only velopharyngeal obstruction	Single-stage RF to palatal tissues	Sham control with local anesthetic and multiple insertions of an applicator needle without the RF
Woodson et al (2003) ⁸	U.S.	2	90 patients with symptomatic mild-to-moderate OSA, randomized to RF, sham, or CPAP	30 subjects received up to 7 sessions (mean, 4.8) of RF to tongue base and palate	30 subjects received a sham procedure to the tongue for 3 sessions, including local anesthetic and multiple insertions of an applicator needle without the RF

CPAP: continuous positive airway pressure; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea; RF: radiofrequency.

Table 10. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Results

Study	AHI	Snoring	ESS	Function	Adverse Events
	Median (Range)	Snoring Median (Range)	Median (Range)	Compound End Point Score ^a Median (Range)	
Back et al (2009) ⁷ ,					
N	32	30	32	32	32
RF	13.0 (2.0-26.0)	5.0 (2.0-8.0)	7.0 (0-20.0)	6 (3-9)	
Sham	11.0 (1.0-29.0)	6.0 (3.0-8.0)	5.0 (2.0-15.0)	7 (4-10)	
p	0.628	0.064	0.941	0.746	No significant differences after 6 d
	Change Score (SD)		Change Score (SD)	FOSQ Score (SD)	
Woodson et al (2003) ⁸ ,					
N	52		54	54	54
RF	-4.5 (13.8)		-2.1 (3.9) ^b	1.2 (1.6) ^b	
Sham	-1.8 (11.5)		-1.0 (3.1)	0.4 (2.0)	
Effect size	0.34		0.50	0.66	No significant differences after 1 wk

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Scale (maximum of 24); FOSQ: Functional Outcomes of Sleep Questionnaire; MCS: Mental Component Summary score; PCS: Physical Component Summary score; SD: standard deviation; SF-36: 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey.

^a The compound end point scored added points derived from AHI, ESS, SF-36 PCS, and SF-36 MCS;

^b p=0.005 for baseline to posttreatment.

Tables 11 and 12 display notable limitations identified in each study.

Table 11. Study Relevance Limitations

Study	Population ^a	Intervention ^b	Comparator ^c	Outcomes ^d	Follow-Up ^e
Black et al (2009) ⁷ ,	4. Included patients with mild OSA and snoring	4. Single treatment with RFA			
Woodson et al (2003) ⁸ ,					

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

OSA: obstructive sleep apnea; RFA: radiofrequency ablation.

^a Population key: 1. Intended use population unclear; 2. Clinical context is unclear; 3. Study population is unclear; 4. Study population not representative of intended use.

^b Intervention key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Version used unclear; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as comparator; 4.

Not the intervention of interest.

^c Comparator key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Not standard or optimal; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as intervention; 4. Not delivered effectively.

^d Outcomes key: 1. Key health outcomes not addressed; 2. Physiologic measures, not validated surrogates; 3. No CONSORT reporting of harms; 4. Not establish and validated measurements; 5. Clinical significant difference not prespecified; 6. Clinical significant difference not supported.

^e Follow-Up key: 1. Not sufficient duration for benefit; 2. Not sufficient duration for harms.

Table 12. Study Design and Conduct Limitations

Study	Allocation ^a	Blinding ^b	Selective Reporting ^d	Data Completeness ^e	Power ^d	Statistical ^f
Back et al (2009) ⁷ ,		2. Surgeons also performed follow-up assessments				.
Woodson et al (2003) ⁸ ,						3. Comparative treatment effects not reported

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Allocation key: 1. Participants not randomly allocated; 2. Allocation not concealed; 3. Allocation concealment unclear; 4. Inadequate control for selection bias.

^b Blinding key: 1. Not blinded to treatment assignment; 2. Not blinded outcome assessment; 3. Outcome assessed by treating physician.

^c Selective Reporting key: 1. Not registered; 2. Evidence of selective reporting; 3. Evidence of selective publication.

^d Follow-Up key: 1. High loss to follow-up or missing data; 2. Inadequate handling of missing data; 3. High number of crossovers; 4. Inadequate handling of crossovers; 5. Inappropriate exclusions; 6. Not intent to treat analysis (per protocol for noninferiority trials).

^e Power key: 1. Power calculations not reported; 2. Power not calculated for primary outcome; 3. Power not based on clinically important difference.

^f Statistical key: 1. Intervention is not appropriate for outcome type: (a) continuous; (b) binary; (c) time to event; 2. Intervention is not appropriate for multiple observations per patient; 3. Confidence intervals and/or p values not reported; 4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated.

Section Summary: Radiofrequency Volumetric Reduction of Palatal Tissues and Base of Tongue

The evidence on RF volume reduction includes 2 randomized trials, both sham-controlled. Single-stage RF to palatal tissues did not improve outcomes compared with sham. Multiple sessions of RF to the palate and base of tongue did not significantly (statistically or clinically) improve AHI, while the improvement in functional outcomes did not achieve a level of clinical significance.

Palatal Stiffening Procedures

Palatal stiffening procedures include insertion of palatal implants, injection of a sclerosing agent (snoreplasty), or a cautery-assisted palatal stiffening operation. Snoreplasty and cautery-assisted palatal stiffening operations are intended for snoring and are not discussed here. Palatal implants are cylindrically shaped devices that are implanted in the soft palate.

Randomized Controlled Trials

Two double-blind, sham-controlled randomized trials with over 50 patients have evaluated the efficacy of palatal implants to improve snoring and OSA (see Table 13). AHI success by the Sher criteria ranged from 26% to 45% at 3-month follow-up. AHI success was observed in 0% to 10% of the sham control patients (see Table 14). In 1 study (Steward et al, 2008), the statistical significance of AHI success was marginal and there was no statistical difference in snoring or change in ESS between the 2 groups.⁹ In the study by Friedman et al (2008), there was greater success in AHI (45% vs 0%, $p < .001$), improvement in snoring (-4.7 vs -0.7 on a 10-point VAS, $p < .001$), and improvement in ESS (-2.4 vs -0.5, $p < .001$) with palatal implants compared with sham controls.³ Patient selection criteria were different in the 2 studies. In the trial by Friedman et al (2008), patients with a Friedman tongue position of IV and palate of 3.5 cm or longer were excluded, whereas, in the trial by Steward et al (2008), selection criteria included patients with primarily retropalatal pharyngeal obstruction.

Table 13. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Characteristics

Study	Countries	Sites	Participants	Interventions	
				Active	Comparator
Steward et al (2008) ⁹	U.S.	3	100 patients with mild-to-moderate OSA (AHI ≥ 5 and ≤ 40), and primarily retropalatal pharyngeal obstruction, BMI ≤ 32 kg/m ²	50 received the office-based insertion of 3 palatal implants	50 received the sham procedure
Friedman et al (2008) ³	U.S.	1	62 patients with mild-to-moderate OSA (AHI ≥ 5 and ≤ 40), soft palate ≥ 2 cm and < 3.5 cm, Friedman tongue position I, II, or III, BMI ≤ 32 kg/m ²	31 received the office-based insertion of 3 palatal implants	31 received the sham procedure

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index, BMI: body mass index; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea.

Table 14. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Results

Study	AHI Success (Sher criteria)	Snoring (10-point VAS)	Change in ESS (95% CI) or (SD)	Change in FOSQ Score (95% CI)	Foreign Body Sensation/Extrusion
Steward et al (2008) ⁹					
N	97	43	96	98	100
Palatal implants	26%	6.7	-1.8 (-0.8 to -2.9)	1.43 (0.84 to 2.03)	18%/4 extruded
Sham control	10%	7.0	-1.5 (-.04 to -2.5)	0.6 (0.01 to 1.20)	2%
p	.04	.052	<i>NS</i>	.05	
Friedman et al (2008) ³		Change in VAS			

Study	AHI Success (Sher criteria)	Snoring (10- point VAS)	Change in ESS (95% CI) or (SD)	Change in FOSQ Score (95% CI)	Foreign Body Sensation/Extrusion
N	55	62	62		
Palatal implants (SD)	44.8%	-4.7 (2.1)	-2.4 (2.2)		2 extruded
Sham control (SD)	0%	-0.7 (0.9)	-0.5 (1.5)		
MD (95% CI)		4.0 (3.2 to 4.9)	1.9 (1.0 to 2.9)		
p	<.001	<.001	<.001		
Summary: Range	26%-44.8%				

CI: confidence interval; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Score; MD: mean difference; NS: not significant; RCT: randomized controlled trial; RR: relative risk; SD: standard deviation; VAS: visual analog scale.

Case Series

Uncontrolled series have provided longer follow-up data on patients treated with palatal implants. Using criteria of 50% improvement in AHI and final AHI of less than 10 events hour, Neruntarat et al (2011) reported a success rate of 52% at a minimum of 24 months (see Tables 15 and 16). Compared with nonresponders, responders had lower body mass index, lower baseline AHI and a lower percentage of patients with a modified Mallampati classification of III or IV (obscured visualization of the soft palate by the tongue). Tables 17 and 18 summarize the limitations of the studies described above.

Table 15. Summary of Key Case Series Characteristics

Study	Country	Participants	Follow-Up
Neruntarat et al (2011) ¹⁰ ,	Thailand	92 patients with mild-to-moderate symptomatic OSA and palate >2 cm	Minimum 24 mo

OSA: obstructive sleep apnea.

Table 16. Summary of Key Case Series Results

Study	N	AHI (SD)	Snoring (SD) (10- point VAS)	ESS (SD)	Implant Extrusion
Neruntarat et al (2011) ¹⁰ ,	92				
Baseline		21.7 (6.8)	8.2 (1.2)	12.3 (2.6)	
29 months		10.8 (4.8)	3.8 (2.3)	7.9 (1.8)	7 (7.6%)
p		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Score; SD: standard deviation; VAS: visual analog scale.

Table 17. Study Relevance Limitations

Study	Population ^a	Intervention ^b	Comparator ^c	Outcomes ^d	Follow-Up ^e
Neruntarat et al (2011) ¹⁰ ,			2. No comparator		
Steward et al (2008) ⁹ ,	4. Out of 968 patients assessed for eligibility, 100 were enrolled				1, 2, 3 mo
Friedman et al (2008) ³ ,	4. Number screened was not reported. Soft palate was at least 2 cm but less than 3.5 cm.				1, 2, 3 mo

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Population key: 1. Intended use population unclear; 2. Clinical context is unclear; 3. Study population is unclear; 4. Study population not representative of intended use.

^b Intervention key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Version used unclear; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as comparator; 4. Not the intervention of interest.

^c Comparator key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Not standard or optimal; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as intervention; 4. Not delivered effectively.

^d Outcomes key: 1. Key health outcomes not addressed; 2. Physiologic measures, not validated surrogates; 3. No CONSORT reporting of harms; 4. Not establish and validated measurements; 5. Clinical significant difference not prespecified; 6. Clinical significant difference not supported.

^e Follow-Up key: 1. Not sufficient duration for benefit; 2. Not sufficient duration for harms.

Table 18. Study Design and Conduct Limitations

Study	Allocation ^a	Blinding ^b	Selective Reportin ^g ^d	Data Completeness ^e	Power ^d	Statistical ^f
Neruntarat et al (2011) ¹⁰ ,	1. Retrospective	1. None (case series)				
Steward et al (2008) ⁹ ,						
Friedman et al (2008) ³ ,						

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Allocation key: 1. Participants not randomly allocated; 2. Allocation not concealed; 3. Allocation concealment unclear; 4. Inadequate control for selection bias.

^b Blinding key: 1. Not blinded to treatment assignment; 2. Not blinded outcome assessment; 3. Outcome assessed by treating physician.

^c Selective Reporting key: 1. Not registered; 2. Evidence of selective reporting; 3. Evidence of selective publication.

^d Follow-Up key: 1. High loss to follow-up or missing data; 2. Inadequate handling of missing data; 3. High number of crossovers; 4. Inadequate handling of crossovers; 5. Inappropriate exclusions; 6. Not intent to treat analysis (per

protocol for noninferiority trials).

^e Power key: 1. Power calculations not reported; 2. Power not calculated for primary outcome; 3. Power not based on clinically important difference.

^f Statistical key: 1. Intervention is not appropriate for outcome type: (a) continuous; (b) binary; (c) time to event; 2. Intervention is not appropriate for multiple observations per patient; 3. Confidence intervals and/or p values not reported; 4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated.

Section Summary: Palatal Stiffening Procedures

Two sham-controlled trials and several case series have assessed palatal implants for the treatment of snoring and OSA. The sham-controlled studies differed in the inclusion criteria, with the study that excluded patients with Friedman tongue position of IV and palate of 3.5 cm or longer reporting greater improvement in AHI (45% success) and snoring (change of -4.7 on a 10-point VAS) than the second trial.

Tongue Base Suspension

In this procedure, the base of the tongue is suspended with a suture that is passed through the tongue and fixated with a screw to the inner side of the mandible, below the tooth roots. The suspension aims to make it less likely for the base of the tongue to prolapse during sleep.

One preliminary RCT with 17 patients was identified that compared UPPP plus tongue suspension with UPPP plus tongue advancement (see Table 19).¹¹ Success rates using the Sher criteria ranged from 50% to 57% (see Table 20). Both treatments improved snoring and reduced ESS to below 10. The major limitations of the trial were the number of subjects (n=17) in this feasibility study and the lack of blinding (see Tables 21 and 22). In addition, there was no follow-up after 16 weeks.

Table 19. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Characteristics

Study	Countries	Sites	Participants	Interventions	
				Active	Comparator
Thomas et al (2003) ¹² ,	U.S.	1	17 patients with moderate-to-severe OSA who failed conservative treatment	• UPPP with tongue suspension • Mean AHI=46 (n=9)	• UPPP with tongue advancement • Mean AHI=37.4 (n=8)

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea; UPPP:uvulopalatopharyngoplasty.

Table 20. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Results

Study	AHI Success (Sher Criteria)	Snoring (SD)	ESS (SD)	Pain, Speech, Swallowing
Thomas et al (2003) ¹² ,				
N	11	17	17	17
UPPP plus tongue suspension	57%	3.3 (2.1) ^a	4.1 (3.4) ^b	
UPPP plus tongue advancement	50%	5.0 (0.6) ^c	5.4 (3.5) ^d	No significant differences between groups

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Score; SD: standard deviation; UPPP:uvulopalatopharyngoplasty.

^a Baseline to posttreatment p=0.02.

^b Baseline to posttreatment p=0.007.

^c Baseline to posttreatment $p=0.04$.

^d Baseline to posttreatment $p=0.004$.

Table 21. Study Relevance Limitations

Study	Population ^a	Intervention ^b	Comparator ^c	Outcomes ^d	Follow-Up ^e
Thomas et al (2003) ¹² ,					1, 2. Follow-up was to 16 wk

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Population key: 1. Intended use population unclear; 2. Clinical context is unclear; 3. Study population is unclear; 4. Study population not representative of intended use.

^b Intervention key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Version used unclear; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as comparator; 4. Not the intervention of interest.

^c Comparator key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Not standard or optimal; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as intervention; 4. Not delivered effectively.

^d Outcomes key: 1. Key health outcomes not addressed; 2. Physiologic measures, not validated surrogates; 3. No CONSORT reporting of harms; 4. Not establish and validated measurements; 5. Clinical significant difference not prespecified; 6. Clinical significant difference not supported.

^e Follow-Up key: 1. Not sufficient duration for benefit; 2. Not sufficient duration for harms.

Table 22. Study Design and Conduct Limitations

Study	Allocation ^a	Blinding ^b	Selective Reporting ^d	Data Completeness ^e	Power ^d	Statistical ^f
Thomas et al (2003) ¹² ,	3. Allocation concealment unclear	1.-3. Not blinded			1. Feasibility study	4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Allocation key: 1. Participants not randomly allocated; 2. Allocation not concealed; 3. Allocation concealment unclear; 4. Inadequate control for selection bias.

^b Blinding key: 1. Not blinded to treatment assignment; 2. Not blinded outcome assessment; 3. Outcome assessed by treating physician.

^c Selective Reporting key: 1. Not registered; 2. Evidence of selective reporting; 3. Evidence of selective publication.

^d Follow-Up key: 1. High loss to follow-up or missing data; 2. Inadequate handling of missing data; 3. High number of crossovers; 4. Inadequate handling of crossovers; 5. Inappropriate exclusions; 6. Not intent to treat analysis (per protocol for noninferiority trials).

^e Power key: 1. Power calculations not reported; 2. Power not calculated for primary outcome; 3. Power not based on clinically important difference.

^f Statistical key: 1. Intervention is not appropriate for outcome type: (a) continuous; (b) binary; (c) time to event; 2. Intervention is not appropriate for multiple observations per patient; 3. Confidence intervals and/or p values not reported; 4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated.

Section Summary: Tongue Base Suspension

One feasibility study with 17 patients was identified on tongue suspension. This study compared tongue suspension plus UPPP with tongue advancement plus UPPP and reported 50% to 57% success rates for the 2 procedures. RCTs with a larger number of subjects are needed to determine whether tongue suspension alone or added to UPPP improves the net health outcome.

Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation

Stimulation of the hypoglossal nerve causes tongue protrusion and stiffening of the anterior pharyngeal wall, potentially decreasing apneic events. For patients with moderate-to-severe sleep apnea who have failed or are intolerant of CPAP, the alternative would be an established surgical procedure, as described above.

Systematic Reviews

A summary of systematic reviews is included in Tables 23 and 24.

Costantino et al conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 6- to 60-month outcomes following HNS¹³. They identified 12 studies with a total of 350 patients with OSA who were treated with the Inspire, ImThera, or Apnex HNS systems. Only the Inspire device has obtained FDA approval as of April 2021, and contributed the largest number of patients to the meta-analysis. In addition to the trials described below by Steffen et al (2015, 2018)^{14,15}, and Strollo et al (STAR Trial, 2014, 2018)^{16,17}, several other trials with the Inspire system were included in the meta-analysis. At 6 mo follow-up, the overall change in AHI was -17.74 with an improvement in ESS of -5.36. At 12 mo follow-up, the change in AHI was -17.50 with an improvement in ESS of -5.27. Sixty-month data were provided only by the STAR trial as reported by Woodson et al (2018) and are described below.¹⁸

Table 23. Meta-analysis Characteristics

Study	Dates	Trials	Participants	N (Range)	Design	Duration
Constantino et al (2020) ¹³ ,	Through 2018	12	Adult patients with moderate to severe OSA	350 (8-124)	Cohort	6, 12, and 60 mo

OSA: obstructive sleep apnea

Table 24. Meta-analysis Results

Study	AHI Change at 6 mo (95% CI)	AHI Change at 12 mo (95% CI)	ESS Change at 6 mo (95% CI)	ESS Change at 12 mo (95% CI)	AHI Success n(%) Sher Criteria ^a
Constantino et al (2020) ¹³ ,					
Total N	210	255	210	255	
Inspire	-17.74 (-24.73 to -10.74)	-17.50 (-20.01 to -14.98)	-5.36 (-6.64 to -4.08)	-5.27 (-6.18 to -4.35)	115 (70%)
ImThera	-9.50 (-19.14 to 0.14)	-24.20 (-37.39 to -11.01)	-3.70 (-5.65 to -1.75)	-2.90 (-6.97 to 1.17)	46 (35%)
Apnex	-24.20 (-30.94 to -17.45)	-20.10 (-29.62 to -10.58)	-3.87 (-5.53 to -2.21)	-4.20 (-6.30 to -2.10)	115 (59.8%)
<i>I</i> ² (p)	68% (.004)	0% (.77)	25% (.25)	27% (.24)	
Range of N	8 to 56	13 to 124	21 to 56	13 to 124	

CI: confidence interval.

Surgical success according to Sher criteria is defined as a 50% reduction in AHI and overall AHI < 20.

Comparative Studies

Study characteristics and results are described in Tables 25 and 26. Limitations in relevance and design and conduct are described in Tables 27 and 28.

No RCTs have been identified on HNS. Comparative evidence consists of 3 studies that compared HNS with historical controls treated with UPPP or a variant of UPPP (expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty) and a study that compared HNS with transoral robotic surgery. AHI success by the Sher criteria ranged from 87% to 100% in the HNS group compared with 40% to 64% in the UPPP group. Posttreatment ESS was below 10 in both groups. It is not clear from some studies whether the patients in the historical control group were similar to the subset of patients in the HNS group, particularly in regards to the pattern of palatal collapse and from patients who did not return for postoperative PSG.

Several comparative studies have addressed these concerns by only including patients who meet the criteria for HNS in the control group. Yu et al (2019) compared outcomes for patients who met the criteria for both HNS (non-concentric collapse on drug-induced sleep endoscopy) and transoral robotic surgery (retroglossal obstruction).¹⁹ When patients with similar anatomic criteria were compared, HNS led to significantly better improvements in AHI, cure rate (defined as AHI < 5), and the percentage of time that oxygen saturation fell below 90%. Huntley et al (2021) selected patients in the control group who met criteria for HNS (non-concentric collapse on drug-induced sleep endoscopy and body mass index [BMI] criteria) but had been treated at their institutions by single or multi-level palatal and lingual surgery.²⁰ There was no explanation of why the different treatments were given during the overlap period of 2010 to 2019, but the HNS patients were older and heavier. HNS resulted in a modestly greater decrease in AHI (HNS: -21.4 vs -15.9, $p < .001$), but not in ESS (HNS: -4.7 vs -5.8, $p = .06$). More patients in the HNS group achieved success by the Sher criteria (70% vs 48 to 49%) suggesting that there might be a clinical benefit for some patients.

Another report from ADHERE registry investigators (Mehra et al, 2020) compared outcomes from HNS patients with patients who met criteria but had been denied insurance coverage.²¹ In a post-hoc multivariate analysis, previous use of PAP and prior surgical procedures were predictors of insurance approval. In the group of patients who received HNS, the average use downloaded from the device was 5.6 h/night and 92% of patients had usage greater than 20 h/week. A majority of the comparator group (86%) were not using any therapy at follow-up. The remaining 14% were using PAP, an oral appliance, or underwent OSA surgery. The AHI decreased to 15 events/h (moderate OSA) on the night of the sleep test in patients with HNS, with only modest improvement in patients who did not receive HNS. The hours of use on the night of the post-operative sleep study was not reported, and the HNS patients may have been more likely to use their device on the test night. In addition, the use of a home sleep test for follow-up may underestimate the AHI. The ESS improved in the HNS group but worsened in the controls. This suggests the possibility of bias in this subjective measure in patients who were denied coverage.

Additional non-comparative reports from the ADHERE registry are described below.

Table 25. Summary of Observational Comparative Study Characteristics

Study	Study Type	Country	Dates	Participants	HNS	Traditional Surgery	Follow-Up
Shah et al (2018) ²²	Retrospective series with historical controls	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNS 2015-2016 • UPPP 2003-2012 	40 OSA patients with AHI >20 and <65, BMI ≤32 kg/m ² , failed CPAP, favorable pattern of palatal collapse ^a	35% had previously had surgery for OSA	UPPP 50% of patients had additional surgical procedures	2-13 mo
Huntley et al (2018) ²³	Retrospective series with historical controls	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNS 2014-2016 • Modified UPPP 2011-2016 	Retrospective review included treated patients who had a postoperative PSG	75 patients age 61.67 y with a favorable pattern of palatal collapse	33 patients age 43.48 y treated by ESP	To post-operative PSG
Yu et al (2019) ¹⁹	Retrospective series with historical controls	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNS 2014-2016 • TORS 2011-NR 	OSA patients with AHI >20 and <65, BMI ≤32 kg/m ² , failed CPAP, favorable pattern of palatal collapse ^a	27 patients age 62 with retroglossal collapse amenable to TORS	20 patients age 53 y who would have qualified for HNS and were treated by TORS	NR
Huntley et al (2020) ²⁰	ADHERE registry compared to retrospective controls	US, EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNS 2010-2019 • Modified UPPP 2003-2019 	OSA patients who were intolerant to CPAP and met HNS criteria of AHI 15 to 65, BMI < 35, and favorable pattern of palatal collapse ^a	465 registry patients treated with HNS who had 12 mo follow-up	233 patients who would have qualified for HNS and were treated by single level (68%) or multilevel (31%) surgery	173 days after surgery 383 days after HNS
Mehra et al (2020) ²¹	ADHERE registry	US, EU	2017-2019	OSA patients who were intolerant to CPAP and met HNS criteria of AHI 15 to 65, BMI < 35, and favorable pattern of palatal collapse ^a	250 registry patients treated with HNS	100 patients who qualified for HNS but were denied insurance coverage	6 to 24 months

BMI: body mass index; CPAP: continuous positive airway pressure; ESP: expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty; HNS: hypoglossal nerve stimulation; NR: not reported; OSA: obstructive sleep apnea; PSG: polysomnography; TORS: transoral robotic surgery; UPPP: uvulopalatopharyngoplasty.

^a A favorable pattern of palatal collapse is not concentric retropalatal obstruction on drug-induced sleep endoscopy.

Table 26. Summary of Key Observational Comparative Study Results

Study	Baseline AHI (SD)	Posttreatment AHI (SD)	AHI Success n(%) Sher Criteria	Baseline ESS (SD)	Posttreatment ESS (SD)
Shah et al (2018) ²² ,					
HNS	38.9 (12.5)	4.5 (4.8) ^b	20 (100%)	13 (4.7)	8 (5.0) ^b
UPPP	40.3 (12.4)	28.8 (25.4) ^a	8 (40%)	11 (4.9)	7 (3.4) ^b
Huntley et al (2018) ²³ ,					
HNS	36.8 (20.7)	7.3 (11.2)	86.7	11.2 (4.2)	5.4 (3.4)
ESP	26.7 (20.3)	13.5 (19.0)	63.6	10.7 (4.5)	7.0 (6.0)
p-Value	.003	.003	.008	.565	<i>NS</i>
Yu et al (2018) ¹⁹ ,					
		Average AHI Reduction	% Cure Rate	Change in SaO ₂ <90%	
HNS		33.3	70.4%	14.1	
TORS		12.7	10.0%	1.3	
p-Value		.002	<.001	.02	
Huntley et al (2020) ²⁰ ,					
HNS	35.5 (15.0)	14.1 (14.4)	70	11.9 (5.5)	7.3 (4.7)
Single or multi-level UPPP	35.0 (13.1)	19.3 (16.3)	48 to 49	11.3 (5.1)	5.9 (4.0)
p-Value	.88	<.001	<.001	.22	.06
Mehra et al (2020) ²¹ ,					
HNS	33.7 (13.4)	14.7 (13.8)		12.3 (5.5)	7.2 (4.8)
No HNS	34.9 (16.4)	26.8 (17.6)		10.9 (5.4)	12.8 (5.2)
p-Value	.95	<.001		.06	<.001

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESP: expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty; HNS: hypoglossal nerve stimulation; *NS*: not significant; Sher criteria: 50% decrease in AHI and final AHI <20; SD; standard deviation; SaO₂: oxygen saturation; TORS: transoral robotic surgery; UPPP: uvulopalatopharyngoplasty.

^a Baseline vs posttreatment p <.05.

^b Baseline vs posttreatment p <.001.

Table 27. Study Relevance Limitations

Study	Population^a	Intervention^b	Comparator^c	Outcomes^d	Follow-Up^e
Shah et al (2018) ^{22,}			2. UPPP may not be the preferred treatment for patients with primarily lingual obstruction		
Huntley et al (2018) ^{23,}	4. Study populations not comparable		1. Not clearly defined, few ESP patients had follow-up PSG		
Yu et al (2018) ^{19,}					1, 2. Duration of follow-up unclear
Huntley et al (2020) ^{20,}	4. Study populations not comparable				1. The timing of follow-up was different (173 days after surgery and 383 days after HNS)
Mehra et al (2020) ^{21,}	4. Study populations not comparable		3. Hours of use on the test night was not reported. This may not represent the normal use of the device.		1. The timing of follow-up was different
Steffen et al (2018) ^{14,}			2.No comparator		
STAR trial ^{16,17,24,25,26,27,}			2.No comparator		

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

ESP: expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty; PSG: polysomnography; STAR: Stimulation Therapy for Apnea Reduction; UPPP: uvulopalatopharyngoplasty.

^a Population key: 1. Intended use population unclear; 2. Clinical context is unclear; 3. Study population is unclear; 4. Study population not representative of intended use.

^b Intervention key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Version used unclear; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as comparator; 4. Not the intervention of interest.

^c Comparator key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Not standard or optimal; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as intervention; 4. Not delivered effectively.

^d Outcomes key: 1. Key health outcomes not addressed; 2. Physiologic measures, not validated surrogates; 3. No CONSORT reporting of harms; 4. Not establish and validated measurements; 5. Clinical significant difference not prespecified; 6. Clinical significant difference not supported.

^e Follow-Up key: 1. Not sufficient duration for benefit; 2. Not sufficient duration for harms.

Table 28. Study Design and Conduct Limitations

Study	Allocation ^a	Blinding ^b	Selective Reporting ^d	Data Completeness ^e	Power ^d	Statistical ^f
Shah et al (2018) ^{22,}	1. Not randomized (retrospective) 4. Inadequate control for selection bias	1.-3. No blinding				4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated
Huntley et al (2018) ^{23,}	1. Not randomized (retrospective)	1.-3. No blinding				
Yu et al (2018) ^{19,}	1. Not randomized (retrospective)					
Huntley et al (2020) ^{20,}	1. Not randomized (retrospective)	1.-3. No blinding				
Mehra et al (2020) ^{21,}	1. Not randomized	1.-3. No blinding			1. Power calculations not reported	
Steffen et al (2018) ^{14,}	1. Not randomized	1.-3. No blinding				
STAR trial ^{16,17,24,25,26,27,}	1. Not randomized	1.-3. No blinding				

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

STAR: Stimulation Therapy for Apnea Reduction.

^a Allocation key: 1. Participants not randomly allocated; 2. Allocation not concealed; 3. Allocation concealment unclear; 4. Inadequate control for selection bias.

^b Blinding key: 1. Not blinded to treatment assignment; 2. Not blinded outcome assessment; 3. Outcome assessed by treating physician.

^c Selective Reporting key: 1. Not registered; 2. Evidence of selective reporting; 3. Evidence of selective publication.

^d Follow-Up key: 1. High loss to follow-up or missing data; 2. Inadequate handling of missing data; 3. High number of crossovers; 4. Inadequate handling of crossovers; 5. Inappropriate exclusions; 6. Not intent to treat analysis (per protocol for noninferiority trials).

^e Power key: 1. Power calculations not reported; 2. Power not calculated for primary outcome; 3. Power not based on clinically important difference.

^f Statistical key: 1. Intervention is not appropriate for outcome type: (a) continuous; (b) binary; (c) time to event; 2. Intervention is not appropriate for multiple observations per patient; 3. Confidence intervals and/or p values not reported; 4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated.

Single-Arm Studies

Characteristics and results of single-arm studies are described in Tables 29 to 31.

Results of prospective single-arm studies show AHI success rates in 66% to 68% of patients who had moderate-to-severe sleep apnea and a favorable pattern of palatal collapse. Mean AHI was 31 to 32 at baseline, decreasing to 14 to 15 at 12 months. ESS scores decreased from 6.5 to 7.0. All improvements were maintained through 5 years of follow-up. Discomfort due to the electrical stimulation and tongue abrasion were initially common but were decreased when stimulation levels were reduced (see Table 29). In the post-market study, a normal ESS score (< 10) was obtained in 73% of patients. A FOSQ score of at least 19 was observed in 59% of patients compared to 13% at baseline. At the 12 month follow-up, 8% of bed partners regularly left the room due to snoring, compared to 75% of bed partners at baseline. The average use was 5.6 + 2.1 h per night. Use was correlated with the subjective outcomes, but not with AHI response. Two- and 3-year follow-up of this study were reported by Steffen et al (2020)¹⁵, but the percentage of patients at follow-up was only 68% at 2 years and 63% at 3 years, limiting conclusions about the longer-term efficacy of the procedure. A comparison of the populations who had 12 month versus 2- or 3-year results showed several differences between the patients who followed up and those who dropped out, including higher baseline AHI, higher baseline ODI, and trends towards lower usage per night and a lower responder rate at 12 months.

Table 29. Summary of Prospective Single-Arm Study Characteristics

Study	Country	Participants	Treatment Delivery	Follow-Up
STAR trial ^{16,17,24,25,28,18,}	EU, U.S.	126 patients with AHI >20 and <50, BMI ≤32 kg/m ² , failed CPAP, favorable pattern of palatal collapse ^a	Stimulation parameters titrated with full PSG	5 y
Postmarket studies: Heiser et al (2017) ²⁹ , Steffen et al (2018) ¹⁴ , Hasselbacher et al (2018) ³⁰ , Steffen et al (2020) ¹⁵ ,	3 sites in Germany	60 patients with AHI ≥15 and ≤65 on home sleep study, BMI ≤35 kg/m ² , failed CPAP; favorable pattern of palatal collapse ^a		12 mo, 2 yr, and 3 yr

AHI: apnea/hypopnea index; BMI: body mass index; CPAP: continuous positive airway pressure; STAR: Stimulation Therapy for Apnea Reduction.

^a favorable pattern of palatal collapse is non-concentric retropalatal obstruction on drug-induced sleep endoscopy.

Table 30. Summary of Prospective Single-Arm Study Results

Study	N	Percent of Patients With AHI Success (Sher criteria)	Mean AHI Score (SD)	Mean ODI Score (SD)	FOSQ Score (SD)	ESS Score (SD)
STAR trial ^{16,17,24,25,28,18,}						
Baseline	126		32.0 (11.8)	28.9 (12.0)	14.3 (3.2)	11.6 (5.0)
12 months	124	66%	15.3 (16.1) ^d	13.9 (15.7) ^d	17.3 (2.9) ^d	7.0 (4.2) ^d

Study	N	Percent of Patients With AHI Success (Sher criteria)	Mean AHI Score (SD)	Mean ODI Score (SD)	FOSQ Score (SD)	ESS Score (SD)
3 years	116 ^a	65%	14.2 (15.9)	9.1 (11.7)	17.4 (3.5) ^b	7.0 (5.0) ^b
5 years	97 ^c	63%	12.4 (16.3)	9.9 (14.5)	18.0 (2.2)	6.9 (4.7)
Postmarket studies: Heiser et al (2017) ²⁹ , Steffen et al (2018) ¹⁴ , Hasselbacher et al (2018) ³⁰ , Steffen et al (2020) ¹⁵ ,						
Baseline	60		31.2 (13.2)	27.6 (16.4)	13.7 (3.6)	12.8 (5.3)
6 months					17.5 (2.8) ^d	7.0 (4.5) ^d
12 months	56 ^f	68%	13.8 (14.8) ^e	13.7 (14.9) ^e	17.5 (3) ^e	6.5 (4.5) ^e
Normalized at 12 months					59%	73%

AHI: Apnea/Hypopnea Index; ESS: Epworth Sleepiness Scale; FOSQ: Functional Outcomes of Sleep Questionnaire; ODI: Oxygen Desaturation Index; PSG: results at 12 or 18 months were carried forward.

^b The change from baseline was significant polysomnography; SD: standard deviation; STAR: Stimulation Therapy for Apnea Reduction.

^a Ninety-eight participants agreed to undergo PSG at 36 months, of the 17 participants who did not undergo PSG at 36 months, 54% were non-responders and their PSG at p<0.001.

^c Seventy-one participants agreed to a PSG.

^f Four patients lost to follow-up were analyzed as treatment failures.

^d p <.001.

^e p <.05.

Table 31. Device-Related Adverse Events From Prospective Single-Arm Studies

Study	N	Discomfort due to Electrical Stimulation ^a	Tongue Abrasion	Dry Mouth	Mechanical Pain From Device	Internal Device Usability	External Device Usability
STAR trial ¹⁸ ,							
0 to 12 months	126	81	28	10	7	12	11
12 to 24 months	124	23	12	5	2	8	11
24 to 36 months	116	26	4	2	3	1	8
36 to 48 months	97	7	3	0	1	3	9
> 48 months		5	3	3	1	1	6
Participants with an event, n of 126 (%)		76 (60.3)	34 (27.0)	19 (15.1)	14 (11.1)	21 (16.7)	33 (26.2)

STAR: Stimulation Therapy for Apnea Reduction.

^a Stimulation levels were adjusted to reduce discomfort

Down Syndrome

Caloway et al (2020) reported a safety study of HNS in 20 children with Down Syndrome and severe OSA (AHI of 10 or greater) treated at 3 tertiary care centers.³¹ Included were non-obese (BMI < 95%) children and adolescents aged 10-21 years who were refractory to tonsillectomy and either unable to tolerate CPAP or dependent on a tracheostomy. Patients who were included had an AHI between 10 and 50 on baseline PSG; the median baseline AHI was 24.15 (interquartile range [IQR] of 19.88 to 35.10). All of the patients tolerated the stimulation, and at 2 months after implantation, the median AHI was 3.56 (IQR 2.61 to 4.40). Success, defined as an AHI of 5 or less (mild) with HNS, was achieved in 14 of 20 patients (70%). The median percent reduction in AHI was 85% with a median usage of 9.21 h (IQR: 8.29 to 9.50) per night. The OSA-18 score improved by 1.15 (IQR: 0.02 to 1.97), indicating a moderate but clinically significant change. There were 2 adverse events related to extrusion or connectivity of the stimulation or sensation leads, which were both corrected with wound exploration surgery. Study in a larger population of children with Down Syndrome is ongoing.

Registry

Boon et al (2018) reported results from 301 patients in the multicenter Adherence and Outcome of Upper Airway Stimulation for OSA International Registry (ADHERE).³² The ADHERE registry included both retrospective and prospectively collected data from the U.S. and Germany between October 2016 and September 2017. Data were collected from PSG prior to implantation and between 2 and 6 months after implantation, or from home sleep tests which were often performed at 6 and 12 months after implantation as part of routine care. Mean AHI decreased from 35.6 (SD: 15.3) to 10.2 (SD: 12.9) post-titration with 48% of patients achieving an AHI of 5 or less. ESS decreased from 11.9 (5.5) to 7.5 (4.7) ($p < .001$).

Kent et al (2019) pooled data from the ADHERE registry plus data from 3 other studies to evaluate factors predicting success.³³ Over 80% of the 584 patients were men, and most were overweight. Seventy-seven percent of patients achieved treatment success, defined as a decrease in AHI by at least 50% and below 20 events/per hour. AHI decreased to below 5 in 41.8% of patients. Greater efficacy was observed in patients with a higher preoperative AHI, older patient age, and lower BMI. A report of data from the ADHERE registry by Thaler et al (2020) included 640 patients with 6-month follow-up and 382 with 12-month follow-up.³⁴ AHI was reduced from 35.8 at baseline to 14.2 at 12 months ($p < .001$), although the number of hours of use during the sleep test was not reported and home sleep studies may underestimate AHI. ESS was reduced from 11.4 at baseline to 7.2 at 12 months ($p < .001$), and patient satisfaction was high. In a multivariate model, only female sex (odds ratio: 3.634, $p = .004$) and lower BMI (odds ratio: 0.913, $p = .011$) were significant predictors of response according to the Sher criteria. In sensitivity analysis, higher baseline AHI was also found to be a negative predictor of success.

In a retrospective analysis by Huntley et al (2018) of procedures at 2 academic institutions, patients with a BMI of greater than 32 did not have lower success rates than patients with a BMI less than 32.³⁵ However, only patients who had palpable cervical landmarks and carried most of their weight in the waist and hips were offered HNS. Therefore, findings from this study are limited to this select group of patients with BMI greater than 32.

Section Summary: Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation

The evidence on HNS for the treatment of OSA includes a systematic review, nonrandomized prospective studies, nonrandomized studies with historical controls, and prospective single-arm studies. For patients with moderate-to-severe OSA who had failed conservative therapy (CPAP) and had a favorable pattern of palatal collapse, about two-thirds met the study definition of success. Results observed at the 12-month follow-up were maintained at 5 years in the pivotal study. A prospective study that compared outcomes in patients who had received HNS to patients who were denied insurance coverage reported significant differences in both objective and subjective measures of OSA. However, there is a high potential for performance bias in this non-blinded study. For children and adolescents with OSA and Down Syndrome who are unable to tolerate CPAP, the evidence includes a safety study with 20 patients treated at tertiary care centers. The success rate was 70% with 2 adverse events of the leads, these were resolved with further surgery. A study in a larger number of patients with Down Syndrome is ongoing. Limitations of the published evidence preclude determining the effects of the technology on net health outcome.

Summary of Evidence

For individuals who have OSA who receive laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty, the evidence includes a single RCT. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The trial indicates reductions in snoring, but limited efficacy on the AHI or symptoms in patients with mild-to-moderate OSA. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have OSA who receive radiofrequency volumetric reduction of palatal tissues and base of tongue, the evidence includes 2 sham-controlled randomized trials. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. Single-stage radiofrequency to palatal tissues did not improve outcomes compared with sham. Multiple sessions of radiofrequency to the palate and base of tongue did not significantly (statistically or clinically) improve AHI, and the improvement in functional outcomes was not clinically significant. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have OSA who receive palatal stiffening procedures, the evidence includes 2 sham-controlled randomized trials and several case series. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The 2 RCTs differed in their inclusion criteria, with the study that excluded patients with Friedman tongue position of IV and palate of 3.5 cm or longer reporting greater improvement in AHI (45% success) and snoring (change of -4.7 on a 10-point visual analog scale) than the second trial. Additional study is needed to corroborate the results of the more successful trial and, if successful, define the appropriate selection criteria. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have OSA who receive tongue base suspension, the evidence includes a feasibility RCT with 17 patients. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The single RCT compared tongue suspension plus uvulopalatopharyngoplasty with tongue advancement plus uvulopalatopharyngoplasty and showed success rates of 50% to 57% for both procedures. RCTs with a larger number of subjects are needed to determine whether tongue suspension alone or added to

uvulopalatopharyngoplasty improves the net health outcome. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have OSA who receive hypoglossal nerve stimulation, the evidence includes a systematic review, nonrandomized prospective studies, nonrandomized studies with historical controls, and prospective single-arm studies. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. Hypoglossal nerve stimulation has shown success rates for about two-thirds of a subset of patients who met selection criteria that included AHI, BMI, and favorable pattern of palatal collapse. These results were maintained out to 5 years in the pivotal single-arm study. The single prospective comparative study of patients who received HNS versus patients who were denied insurance coverage for the procedure has a high potential for performance bias. For children and adolescents with OSA and Down Syndrome who are unable to tolerate CPAP, the evidence includes a safety study with 20 patients who were treated at tertiary care centers. The success rate was 70% with 2 adverse events of the leads, which were resolved with further surgery. A study in a larger number of patients with Down Syndrome is ongoing. Double-blind studies in adults with OSA are also in progress. Limitations of the current evidence base preclude determination of who is most likely to benefit from this invasive procedure. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The purpose of the following information is to provide reference material. Inclusion does not imply endorsement or alignment with the evidence review conclusions.

Clinical Input From Physician Specialty Societies and Academic Medical Centers

While the various physician specialty societies and academic medical centers may collaborate with and make recommendations during this process, through the provision of appropriate reviewers, input received does not represent an endorsement or position statement by the physician specialty societies or academic medical centers, unless otherwise noted.

2018 Input

Clinical input was sought to help determine whether the use of hypoglossal nerve stimulation for individuals with (OSA) would provide a clinically meaningful improvement in net health outcome and whether the use is consistent with generally accepted medical practice. In response to requests, clinical input was received from 2 respondents, including 1 specialty society-level response and physicians with academic medical center affiliation.

For individuals who have OSA who receive HNS, clinical input supports that this use provides a clinically meaningful improvement in net health outcome and indicates this use is consistent with generally accepted medical practice in subgroups of appropriately selected patients. One subgroup includes adult patients with a favorable pattern of non-concentric palatal collapse. The alternative treatment for this anatomical endotype is maxillo-mandibular advancement (MMA), which is associated with greater morbidity and lower patient acceptance than HNS. The improvement in AHI with HNS, as shown in the STAR trial, is similar to the improvement in AHI following MMA. Another subgroup includes appropriately selected adolescents with OSA and Down's syndrome who have difficulty in using CPAP. The following patient selection criteria are based on information from clinical study populations and clinical expert opinion.

- Age \geq 22 years in adults or adolescents with Down's syndrome age 10 to 21; AND

- Diagnosed moderate to severe OSA (with less than 25% central apneas); AND
- CPAP failure or inability to tolerate CPAP; AND
- Body mass index ≤ 32 kg/m² in adults; AND
- Favorable pattern of palatal collapse

Further details from clinical input are included in the Appendix.

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements

Guidelines or position statements will be considered for inclusion in 'Supplemental Information' if they were issued by, or jointly by, a US professional society, an international society with US representation, or National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Priority will be given to guidelines that are informed by a systematic review, include strength of evidence ratings, and include a description of management of conflict of interest.

American Academy of Sleep Medicine

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2010) published practice parameters for surgical modifications of the upper airway for OSA.¹⁸ The AASM practice parameters were based on a systematic review of the evidence that found the published literature was comprised primarily of case series, with few controlled trials and varying approaches to preoperative evaluation and postoperative follow-up.³⁶ Using the change in Apnea/Hypopnea Index (AHI) as the primary measure of efficacy, substantial and consistent reductions were observed following mandibular-maxillary advancement, and adverse events were uncommonly reported. Outcomes following pharyngeal surgeries were less consistent, and adverse events were more commonly reported. The review found that outcomes of studies with newer pharyngeal techniques and multilevel procedures, performed in small numbers of patients, appear promising. The practice parameters noted the lack of rigorous data evaluating surgical modifications of the upper airway, resulting in a recommendation of "option" (uncertain clinical use) for mandibular-maxillary advancement, uvulopalatopharyngoplasty as a sole procedure, or multilevel or stepwise surgery if patients failed uvulopalatopharyngoplasty as a sole treatment. Use of radiofrequency ablation was recommended as an "option" for patients with mild-to-moderate OSA who cannot tolerate or are unwilling to adhere to continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), or in whom oral appliances have been found ineffective or undesirable. Palatal implants were recommended as an "option" for patients with mild OSA who failed medical therapy. Laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty was not recommended as a routine treatment for OSA (standard). The practice parameters recommended as "standard" the need to determine the presence and severity of OSA before initiating surgical therapy, discussion of success rates, complications, and alternative treatments with the patient, and a postoperative follow-up evaluation, which includes a clinical evaluation and an objective measure of the presence and severity of sleep-disordered breathing and oxygen saturation. However, little guidance was available in the medical literature to recommend any particular monitoring strategy. The optimal interval and duration of this follow-up were also not clear from the available literature.

This guideline is being updated in 2021.

American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics (2012) published a clinical practice guideline on the diagnosis and management of childhood OSA.³⁷ The Academy indicated that if a child has OSA, a clinical examination consistent with adenotonsillar hypertrophy, and does not have a

contraindication to surgery, the clinician should recommend adenotonsillectomy as first-line treatment. The Academy recommended that patients should be referred for CPAP management if symptoms/signs or objective evidence of OAS persist after adenotonsillectomy or if adenotonsillectomy is not performed. Weight loss was recommended in addition to other therapy if a child or adolescent with OSA is overweight or obese.

American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery

The American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS; 2014) has a position statement on surgical management of OSA³⁸. Procedures AAO-HNS supported as effective and not considered investigational when part of a comprehensive approach in the medical and surgical management of adults with OSA include:

- tracheotomy,
- nasal and pharyngeal airway surgery,
- tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy,
- palatal advancement,
- uvulopalatopharyngoplasty,
- uvulopalatoplasty (including laser-assisted and other techniques),
- genioglossal advancement,
- hyoid myotomy,
- midline glossectomy,
- tongue suspension,
- maxillary and mandibular advancement.

In a 2019 position statement, AAO-HNS supported hypoglossal nerve stimulation as an effective second-line treatment of moderate-to-severe OSA.³⁸

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (2012) published guidelines on the perioperative management of OSA.³⁹ The guideline indicated that OSA is strongly associated with obesity, with the incidence of OSA in the morbidly obese population reported as between 38% and 88%. The Society recommended bariatric surgery as the initial treatment of choice for OSA in this population, as opposed to surgical procedures directed at the mandible or tissues of the palate.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

2017 guidance from the U.K.'s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) concluded that evidence on the safety and efficacy of hypoglossal nerve stimulation is limited in quantity and quality.⁴⁰

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations

Not applicable.

Ongoing and Unpublished Clinical Trials

Some currently unpublished trials that might influence this review are listed in Table 32.

Table 32. Summary of Key Trials

NCT No.	Trial Name	Planned Enrollment	Completion Date
<i>Ongoing</i>			
NCT02344108 ^a	A Pilot Study to Evaluate the Safety and Efficacy of the Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulator in Adolescents and Young Adults With Down Syndrome and Obstructive Sleep Apnea	42	Aug 2021
NCT03359096	Cardiovascular Endpoints for Obstructive Sleep Apnea With Twelfth Nerve Stimulation (CARDIOSA-12): A Randomized, Sham-Controlled, Double-Blinded, Crossover Trial	80	Jun 2025
NCT02413970 ^a	Inspire® Upper Airway Stimulation System (UAS): Post-Approval Study Protocol Number 2014-001	127	Jun 2025
NCT03868618 ^a	A Multicenter Study to Assess the Safety and Effectiveness of the Genio Dual-sided Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation System for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Adults Subjects	134	Mar 2022
NCT02263859 ^a	ImThera Medical Targeted Hypoglossal Neurostimulation Study #3 (THN3)	138	Dec 2022
NCT03763682 ^a	A Multicentre, Prospective, Open-label, 2 Groups Study to Assess the Safety and Performance of the Genio™ Bilateral Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation System for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Adult Patients With and Without Complete Concentric Collapse of the Soft Palate	42	May 2024
NCT04801771 ^a	Effects of Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation on Cognition and Language in Down Syndrome and Obstructive Sleep Apnea	68	Mar 2025
NCT04031040 ^a	A Post-market Clinical Follow up of the Genio™ System for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Adults (EliSA)	110	Oct 2025
NCT02907398 ^a	Adherence and Outcome of Upper Airway Stimulation (UAS) for OSA International Registry	5000	Sep 2025
<i>Unpublished</i>			
NCT03760328	Effect of Upper Airway Stimulation: A Randomized Controlled Crossover Study	100	Sep 2020

NCT: national clinical trial. ACTRN: Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry

^a Denotes industry-sponsored or cosponsored trial.

CODING

The following codes for treatment and procedures applicable to this policy are included below for informational purposes. This may not be a comprehensive list of procedure codes applicable to this policy.

Inclusion or exclusion of a procedure, diagnosis or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.

The code(s) listed below are medically necessary ONLY if the procedure is performed according to the "Policy" section of this document.

CPT/HCPCS

21199	Osteotomy, mandible, segmental; with genioglossus advancement
21685	Hyoid myotomy and suspension
41512	Tongue base suspension, permanent suture technique
41530	Submucosal ablation of the tongue base, radiofrequency, 1 or more sites, per session
42145	Palatopharyngoplasty (e.g., uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, uvulopharyngoplasty)
42299	Unlisted procedure, palate, uvula
42820	Tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy; younger than 12
42821	Tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy; age 12 or over
42825	Tonsillectomy, primary or secondary; younger than age 12
42826	Tonsillectomy, primary or secondary; age 12 or over
42830	Adenoidectomy, primary; younger than age 12
42831	Adenoidectomy, primary; age 12 or over
42835	Adenoidectomy, secondary; younger than age 12
42836	Adenoidectomy, secondary; age 12 or over
64568	Incision for implantation of cranial nerve (e.g., vagus nerve) neurostimulator electrode array and pulse generator
0466T	Insertion of chest wall respiratory sensor electrode or electrode array, including connection to pulse generator (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
0467T	Revision or replacement of chest wall respiratory sensor electrode or electrode array, including connection to existing pulse generator
0468T	Removal of chest wall respiratory sensor electrode or electrode array
C9727	Insertion of implants into the soft palate; minimum of three implants
S2080	Laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty (LAUP)

ICD-10 Diagnoses

G47.33	Obstructive sleep apnea (adult) (pediatric)
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REVISIONS

10-01-2015	<p>Policy added to the bcbsks.com web site on 09-01-2015 and effective 10-01-2015.</p> <p>The new policy replaced two policies titled: "Laser Assisted Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (LAUP)" and "Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP) and Tongue Base Reduction Surgery"</p>
05-13-2016	<p>In Policy section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Item A, added "(see Policy Guidelines)" to read "Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP) may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of clinically significant obstructive sleep apnea syndrome (OSA) in appropriately selected adult patients who have failed an adequate trial of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:" ▪ In Item B, added "(see Policy Guidelines)" to read "Hyoid suspension, surgical modification of the tongue, and/or maxillofacial surgery, including mandibular-maxillary advancement (MMA), may be considered medically necessary in appropriately selected adult patients with clinically significant OSA and objective documentation of hypopharyngeal obstruction who have failed an adequate trial of CPAP (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:" ▪ In Policy Guidelines, added "3. A trial of CPAP is defined as utilization for 60 days or greater." <p>Updated References section.</p>
01-18-2017	<p>Updated Description section.</p> <p>In Policy section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Item A, added "Palatopharyngoplasty (e.g." and "uvulopharyngoplasty, uvulopalatal flap, expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty, lateral pharyngoplasty, palatal advancement pharyngoplasty, relocation pharyngoplasty)" and removed "(UPPP)" to read, "Palatopharyngoplasty (e.g., uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, uvulopharyngoplasty, uvulopalatal flap, expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty, lateral pharyngoplasty, palatal advancement pharyngoplasty, relocation pharyngoplasty) may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of clinically significant obstructive sleep apnea syndrome (OSA) in appropriately selected adult patients who have failed an adequate trial of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:" ▪ In Item B, added an "s" and removed "patients" to read, "Hyoid suspension, surgical modification of the tongue, and/or maxillofacial surgery, including mandibular-maxillary advancement (MMA), may be considered medically necessary in appropriately selected adults with clinically significant OSA and objective documentation of hypopharyngeal obstruction who have failed an adequate trial of CPAP (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:" ▪ In Item B 1, added "of" to read, "AHI or RDI of 15 or more events per hour," ▪ In Item B 2, added "of" to read, "AHI or RDI of 5 or more events and 14 or less events per hour with documented symptoms of excessive daytime sleepiness, impaired cognition, mood disorders or insomnia, or documented hypertension, ischemic heart disease, or history of stroke." <p>Updated Rationale section.</p> <p>In Coding section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Added CPT code: 64568. ▪ Added CPT codes: 0466T, 0467T, 0468T (<i>new codes, effective January 1, 2017</i>). <p>Updated References section.</p>

10-25-2017	<p>Updated Description section.</p> <p>Updated Rationale section.</p> <p>Updated References section.</p>
02-01-2019	<p>Updated Description section.</p> <p>In Policy section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Item A, removed "patients" to read, "Palatopharyngoplasty (e.g., uvulopalatopharyngoplasty, uvulopharyngoplasty, uvulopalatal flap, expansion sphincter pharyngoplasty, lateral pharyngoplasty, palatal advancement pharyngoplasty, relocation pharyngoplasty) may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of clinically significant obstructive sleep apnea syndrome (OSA) in appropriately select adults who have failed an adequate trial of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) (see Policy Guidelines) or failed an adequate trial of an oral appliance. Clinically significant OSA is defined as those patients who have:" ▪ Added new Item D, "Hypoglossal nerve stimulation may be considered medically necessary in adults with OSA under the following conditions: 1. Age ≥22 years; AND 2. AHI ≥20 with less than 25% central apneas; AND 3. CPAP failure (residual AHI ≥20 or failure to use CPAP ≥4 hours per night for ≥5 nights per week) or inability to tolerate CPAP; AND 4. Body mass index ≤32 kg/m²; AND 5. Non-concentric retropalatal obstruction on drug-induced sleep endoscopy (see Policy Guidelines)." ▪ Added new Item E, "Hypoglossal nerve stimulation may be considered medically necessary in adolescents or young adults with Down's syndrome and OSA under the following conditions: 1. Age 10 to 21 years; AND 2. AHI >10 and <50 with less than 25% central apneas after prior adenotonsillectomy; AND 3. Have either tracheotomy or be ineffectively treated with CPAP due to noncompliance, discomfort, undesirable side effects, persistent symptoms despite compliance use, or refusal to use the device; AND 4. Body mass index ≤95th percentile for age; AND 5. Non-concentric retropalatal obstruction on drug-induced sleep endoscopy (see Policy Guidelines). ▪ In Item H (previously Item F), removed "including, but not limited to, the treatment of OSA" and added "other than listed above" to read, "Implantable hypoglossal nerve stimulators are considered experimental / investigational for all indications other than listed above." ▪ Updated Policy Guidelines. <p>Updated Rationale section.</p> <p>In Coding section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removed CPT code: 41599. ▪ Removed ICD-9 codes. <p>Updated References section.</p>
09-13-2019	<p>The policy published to the bcbsks.com website on August 14, 2019 with an effective date of September 13, 2019.</p> <p>Updated Description section.</p> <p>In Policy section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Item A 1, removed "An" to read, "Apnea/Hypopnea Index (AHI) or Respiratory Disturbance Index (RDI) of 15 or more events per hour, OR" ▪ In Item A 2, removed "An", "or more", "and 14 or less events", "documented", "impaired cognition, mood disorders or insomnia, or documented", "ischemic", and "history of" and added "at least", "one or more signs or", "associated with OSA (e.g., and "cardiovascular" to read, "AHI or RDI of at least 5 events per hour with one or more signs or symptoms associated with OSA (e.g., excessive daytime sleepiness, hypertension, heart disease, or stroke)." ▪ In Item B 1, removed "An" to read, "AHI or RDI of at least 5 per hour, OR" ▪ In Item B 2, removed "An", "or more", "and 14 or less events per hour with documented", "impaired cognition, mood disorders or insomnia, or documented", "ischemic", and "history of" and added "at least", "per hour with one or more signs or",

	<p>"associated with OSA (e.g.", and "cardiovascular" to read, "AHI or RDI of at least 5 events per hour with one or more signs or symptoms associated with OSA (e.g., excessive daytime sleepiness, hypertension, cardiovascular heart disease, or stroke)."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Item C 1, removed "An" to read, "AHI or RDI of at least 5 per hour, OR" ▪ In Item C 2, removed "An" to read, "AHI or RDI of at least 1.5 per hour in a patient with excessive daytime sleepiness, behavioral problems, or hyperactivity." ▪ In Item D 2, removed "20" and added "15" to read, "AHI ≥15 with less than 25% central apneas; AND" ▪ In Item D 3, removed "20" and added "15" to read, "CPAP failure (residual AHI ≥15 or failure to use CPAP ≥4 hours per night for ≥5 nights per week) or inability to tolerate CPAP; AND" ▪ In Item H, added "other than listed above" to read, "Implantable hypoglossal nerve stimulators are considered experimental / investigational for all indications other than listed above." ▪ Updated Policy Guidelines.
	Updated Rationale section.
	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Added CPT code: 21685. ▪ Added HCPCS code: C9727.
	Updated References section.
04-19-2021	Updated Description section.
	Updated Rationale section.
	Updated References section.
08-19-2021	Updated Description section.
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