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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHODS FOR ESTIMATING
RESPIRATORY AIRFLOW**

(75) Inventors: **Zahra Kazem-Moussavi**, Winnipeg
(CA); **Azadeh Yadollahi**, Toronto
(CA)

(73) Assignee: **University of Manitoba**, Winnipeg
(CA)

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Primary Examiner — Nathan J Jenness

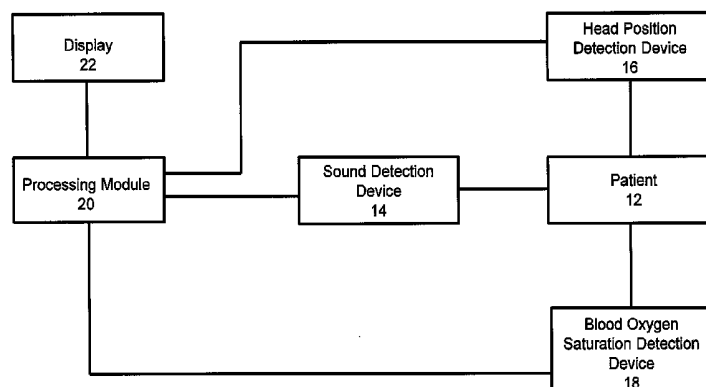
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Valauskas Corder LLC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system and methods for screening patients suspected of
obstructive sleep apnea. The system includes a sound detec-
tion device configured for detecting tracheal respiratory
sound signals of a patient and a Sao_2 detection device for
detecting SaO_2 signals of the patient. The system also has a
head position detection device for detecting the head posi-
tions of the patient during testing, and a processing module
for receiving and analyzing the tracheal respiratory sound
signals to extract sound data and the Sao_2 signals to extract
blood oxygen saturation data. The processing module fur-
ther receives and analyzes the head position signals captured
by the head position detection device to generate head
position data. The system may further include a display for

(Continued)

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displaying information about the various data generated by the processing module.

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(58) Field of Classification Search

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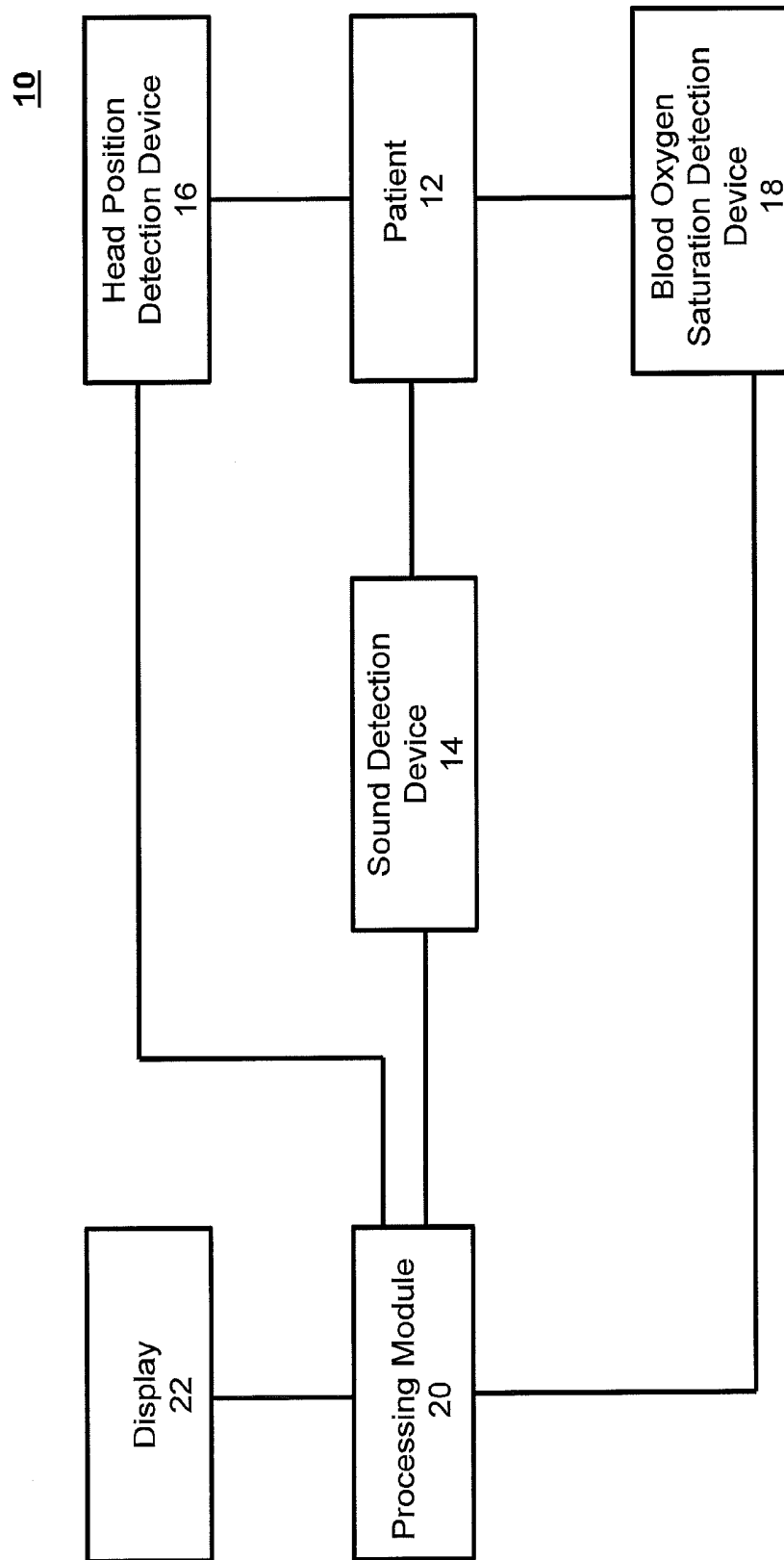


FIG. 1

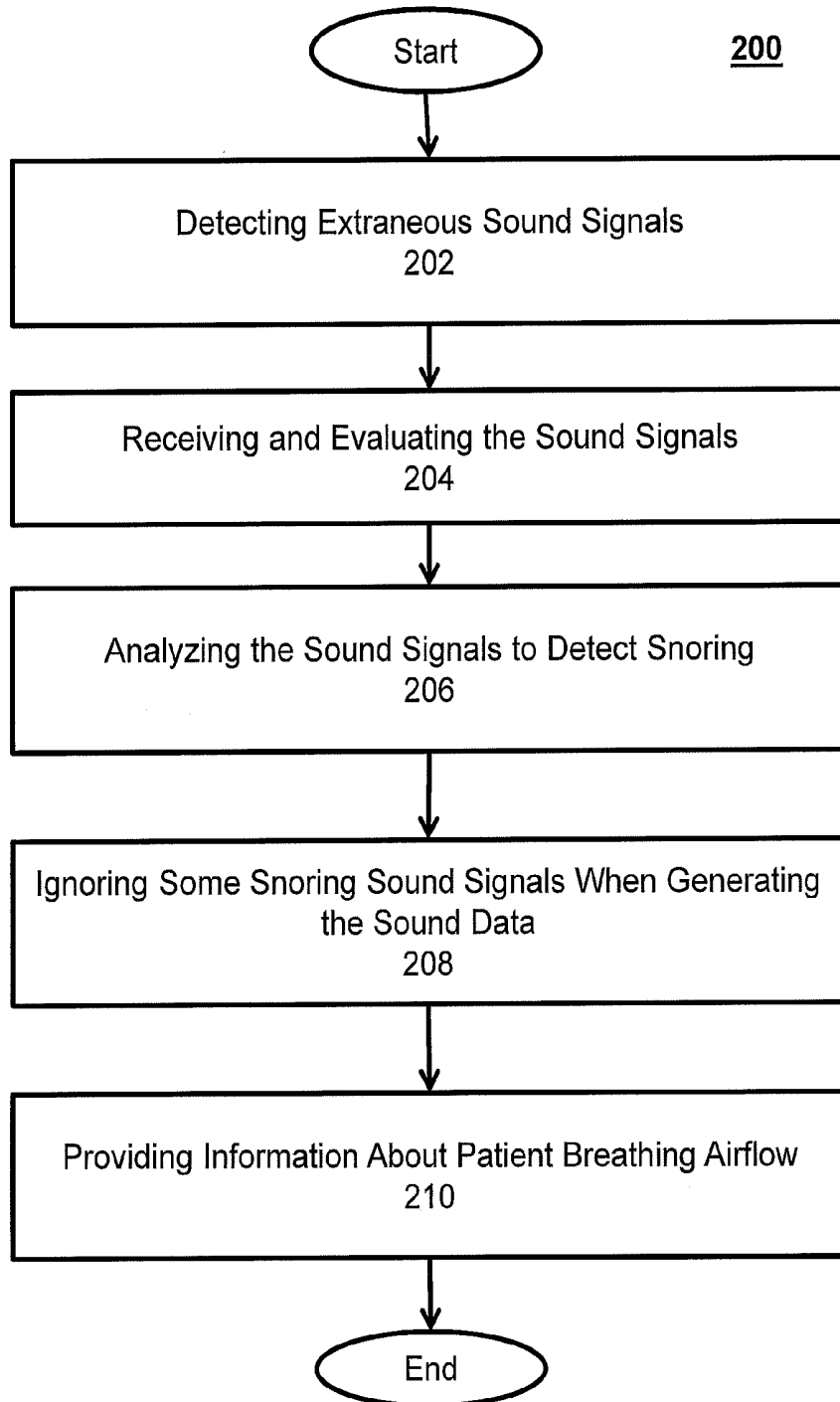


FIG. 2

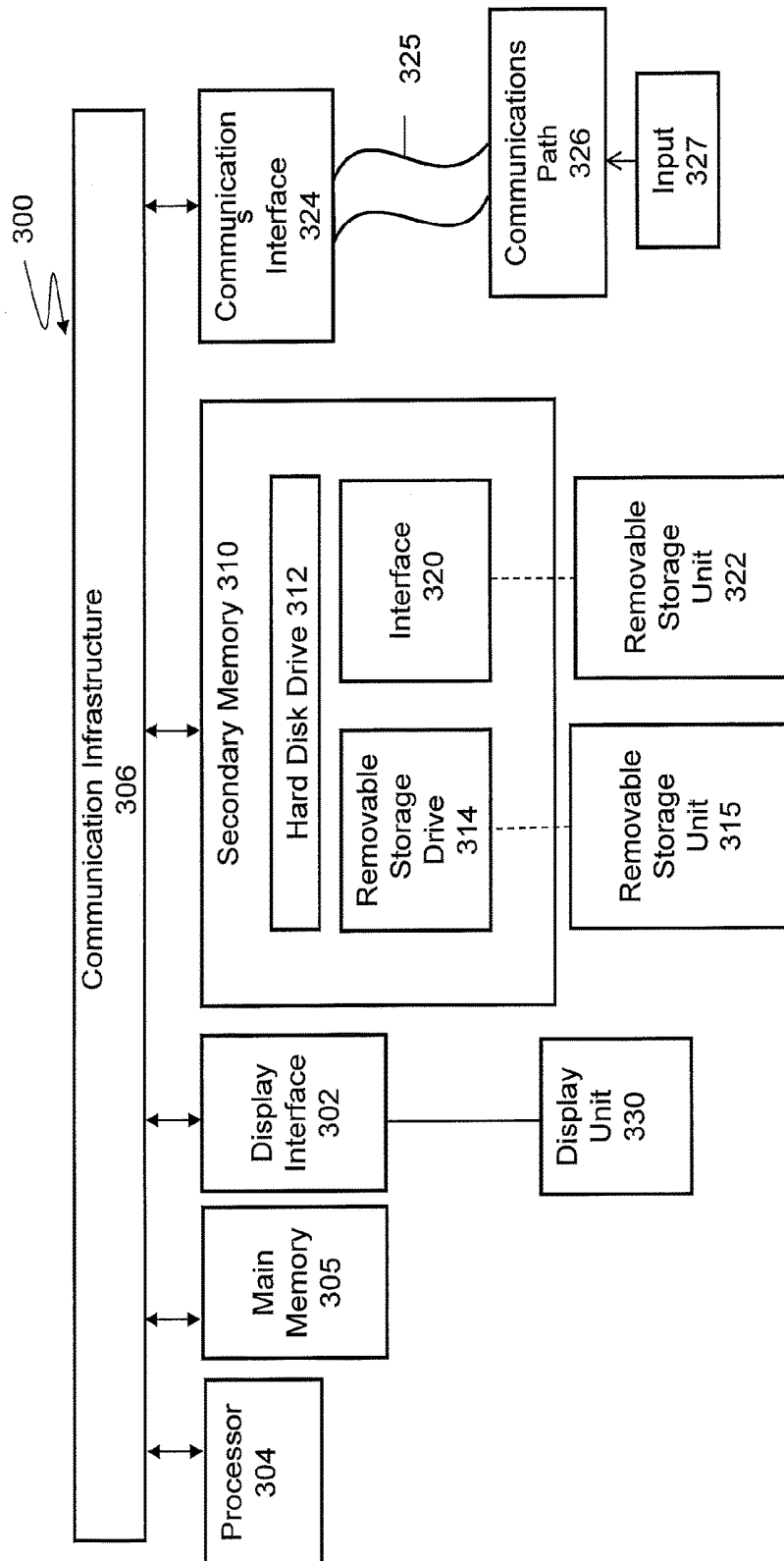


FIG. 3

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SYSTEM AND METHODS FOR ESTIMATING RESPIRATORY AIRFLOW

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/531,772, filed Sep. 7, 2011, which is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates generally to a system and methods of detecting events while a patient sleeps. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system and methods for calculating a relative estimation of respiratory airflow, detecting apnea events and hypopnea events while the patient is asleep, and also apnea/hypopnea index (AHI) and snoring events in different head/neck positions with respect to a torso of the patient.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Sleep apnea is a sleep disorder characterized by pauses in breathing during sleep. By definition, sleep apnea is the cessation of airflow to the lungs during sleep which lasts for at least 10 seconds, and is usually associated with more than a 4% drop in blood oxygen saturation ("SaO₂") level. There are three distinct forms of sleep apnea: central; obstructive; and complex. Complex sleep apnea is defined as a combination of central and obstructive sleep apnea. It is estimated that central, obstructive, and complex sleep apnea account for approximately 0.4%, 84% and 15% of the reported cases, respectively. With central sleep apnea, a patient's breathing is interrupted by the lack of respiratory effort. With obstructive sleep apnea, partial or complete collapse of airways interrupts patient breathing. With complex sleep apnea, there is a transition by a patient from central sleep apnea characteristics to obstructive sleep apnea characteristics during breathing.

Obstructive sleep apnea ("OSA") is the most common respiratory disorder that may lead to a myriad of problems including daytime fatigue, irritability, impaired concentration, poor job performance, increased risk of accidents, and cardiovascular problems. OSA is most common in people with high blood pressure, people with a narrowed airway due to tonsils or adenoids, and people who smoke tobacco products. OSA occurs more frequently in elderly, and is more common among males than females.

Currently, polysomnography ("PSG") is a preferred tool for diagnosing sleep apnea. PSG includes a comprehensive recording of biophysiological changes in a patient during sleep. A typical PSG test includes recording various biological signals, including brain signals ("EEG"), heart rhythm signals ("ECG"), muscle activity or skeletal muscle activation signals ("EMG") of chin and legs, nasal airflow signals, electro-oculogram or eye movement signals ("EOG"), and abdominal and thoracic movement signals. A disadvantage of PSG time gathering and evaluating the biological signals is time consuming. Further, PSG is inconvenient and expensive because it requires a full night of patient supervision by a healthcare professional.

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Alternative technologies for diagnosing sleep apnea may record a reduced number of signals and detect apnea events during sleep. Many of the current technologies record patient airflow. In these technologies, patient breathing airflow may be measured by either a face mask or a nasal cannula connected to a pressure transducer, and cessation of patient breathing airflow is detected as the main diagnostic sign of sleep apnea, particularly OSA. In the case of mouth breathing by a patient, which may occur often during the night, the nasal cannula will not register airflow. Therefore, a nasal cannula is not very reliable. On the other hand, using a face mask, which is considered a more reliable device for breathing airflow measurement, may change the breathing pattern of the patient. Additionally, it is difficult for some patients to fall asleep wearing a face mask.

A majority of people (~70%) who undergo a full-night sleep study are not diagnosed as severely apneic. Therefore, there is a need for a non-invasive system and methods to pre-screen patients suspected of sleep apnea that avoids the inconveniences of current invasive respiratory airflow detection devices such as nasal cannulae and masks. The present invention satisfies this demand.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a system and methods to gather data about patients to diagnose patients for OSA. The system and methods are non-invasive and provide patient screening results that are comparable in accuracy to tests using full-night PSG. An acoustical analysis is conducted on the tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient to extract characteristics of a patient's breathing. A probe measures the SaO₂ signals of a patient, and head sleep positions are detected.

Patients with some degree of upper airway congestion are more prone to develop OSA. Patients with OSA commonly have a defective ability to dilate the airways during inspiration. The classification of patients with OSA is determined by an apnea/hypopnea index ("AHI") which shows the number of apnea and hypopnea events per hour: AHI<5 classifies patients as non-OSA, 5<AHI<15 classifies patients as mild, 15<AHI<30 classifies patients as moderate, and AHI>30 classifies patients as severe.

As used herein, an "apnea event" is defined as cessation of airflow signal lasting 10 seconds or longer followed by a decrease in SaO₂. By "cessation of airflow" is meant a reduction of more than 90% in the amplitude of respiratory airflow from its baseline. A "hypopnea event" as used herein refers to a reduction in airflow signal to less than 50% of its baseline amplitude, accompanied by a ≥3% reduction in S_aO₂.

In one embodiment of the invention, a non-invasive system for screening a patient for OSA includes a sound detection device configured for detecting tracheal respiratory sound signals of a patient. The system also includes a SaO₂ detection device and a head position detection device for detecting the head positions of the patient under test. In one embodiment, the SaO₂ detection device is a pulse oximetry device for detecting SaO₂ signals of the patient. Additionally, the system includes a processing module for receiving and analyzing the patient tracheal respiratory sound signals and SaO₂ signals to extract breathing data. The processing module further receives and analyzes the head position data captured by the head position detection device. The system may also include a display for displaying information about the various data received by the processing module.

In one embodiment, the sound detection device is a microphone configured to be located on a patient's neck over the patient's suprasternal notch for detecting the tracheal sounds of the patient.

In some embodiments, the SaO₂ detection device is a finger probe that detects SaO₂ signals of a patient.

In one embodiment, the head position detection device is an accelerometer placed on a patient's head, e.g., on the patient's forehead, for detection of the head position of the patient.

In certain embodiments, the processing module is configured for receiving and analyzing the tracheal respiratory sound signals and SaO₂ signals from a patient to extract data related to the breathing of the patient and apnea and hypnea events.

In one embodiment, the processing module analyzes the tracheal respiratory sound signals and SaO₂ signals of a patient to generate an estimate of airflow while extracting snoring sounds and heart sounds from the recorded tracheal sounds of the patient. Respiratory airflow is calculated based on the energy of tracheal sound. The relationship between respiratory air flow and sound follows a power law, which may be expressed as $A_s = kF^\alpha$ where E_s and F represent the tracheal sound's average power and flow, respectively. Therefore, a linear relationship exists between the air flow and sound's average power in logarithm scale loci $F = a \log E_s + b$ where $a = 1/\alpha$ and $b = -\log k/\alpha$. The sound's average power E_s may be estimated by calculating the signal's variance, where the logarithm of the sound's variance follows the changes in the breathing flow. Such a method was applied and tested on data of different individuals during wakefulness and sleep (Yadollahi and Moussavi, IEEE Trans Biomed Eng 2011 58(6) 1663-1670); Yadollahi et al. Respiratory Flow-Sound relationship during Wakefulness and Sleep and its Variation in Relation to Sleep Apnea, *Ann Biomed Eng.* 2013 41(3) 537-46) using the following model equation:

$$\log F_{est} = \bar{E}_s / E_{base} \times \log E_s + \bar{b} = \bar{E}_s \times [\bar{a} / \bar{E}_{base}] \times \log E_s + \bar{b},$$

where F_{est} is the estimated respiratory flow, E_s is the tracheal sound energy. The model parameters $\bar{a}$ and $\bar{b}$ —which relate to the power of the tracheal respiratory sound signals and the variations in tracheal anatomy producing the tracheal respiratory sound signals, respectively—may be derived through a calibration process for every subject. However the rate of increase in sound's energy is not similar at different respiratory flow rates. Therefore, using the same parameters $\bar{a}$ and $\bar{b}$ for all respiratory flow rates will cause over/under estimation at the lower/higher respiratory flow rates than the flow rate used for calibrating the model (M. Golabbakhsh, "Tracheal breath sound relationship with respiratory flow: Modeling, the effect of age and airflow estimation," Master's thesis, Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, University of Manitoba, 2004; I. Hossain and Z. Moussavi, "Respiratory airflow estimation by acoustical means," in Proc. Second joint EMBS/BMES Conf., Houston, Tex., USA, 2002, pp. 1476-1477), and where $\bar{E}$ is the average of sound's energy, E_s is the sound's energy in the overlapping windows of current breath cycle, and E_{base} is the sound's energy in the breath cycle used for calibrating the model equation.

Since the sound generation mechanisms are different during inspiration and expiration, different parameters may be extracted for each phase. Hence, a_{ins} , b_{ins} , a_{exp} , and b_{exp} represent the model parameters during inspiration and expiration phases, respectively, where $a_{ins} = \bar{a}/E_{base-ins}$ and $a_{exp} = \bar{a}/$

$E_{base-exp}$ are normalized values of a -parameter during inspiration and expiration, respectively. This normalization also cancels out the effects of sound variations between individuals.

Multiple approaches, using, for example, linear regression based on a least mean squared error, may be used to calibrate the model equation, and estimate parameters $\bar{a}$ and $\bar{b}$. In the one approach, the subject's data, including the recorded tracheal sound and respiratory airflow by using, for example, a microphone or other audio recorder and pneumotachograph connected to a differential pressure transducer, respectively, during wakefulness to calibrate the model and estimate respiratory air flow and tracheal sound during sleep. Therefore, the model equations may be calibrated using one breath cycle with known respiratory flow recorded during wakefulness at a similar head position to the data during sleep. In another approach, one breath cycle with known respiratory flow during sleep may be used to calibrate the model and estimate parameters $\bar{a}$ and $\bar{b}$. To compare different calibration schemes, the changes in model parameters may be investigated from wakefulness to sleep, and the respiratory flow estimation error using different calibration approaches may be estimated according to the following:

$$\text{Error} = \frac{\text{mean}(F - F_{est})^2}{\text{mean}(F^2)} \times 100.$$

In some embodiments, the processing module is configured to estimate the air volume in the respiratory phases adjacent to the snoring phases in order to remove the effects of snoring sounds on the tracheal sounds and have an estimate of respiratory air volume of the patient in the respiratory phases including snoring sounds.

In one embodiment, the processing module is configured for presenting an estimated respiratory airflow to monitor a breathing pattern of a patient during a time period. The time period may be any duration, such as throughout the time a patient sleeps at night.

In certain embodiments, the processing module is configured for analyzing the estimated respiratory airflow to detect time periods of apnea and/or hypopnea events experienced by the patient under testing.

In one embodiment, the processing module is configured for analyzing the head position detection device data to detect the head position of a patient during the night.

In one embodiment, the processing module is configured for using the detected snoring sounds of a patient to estimate a severity of snoring sounds and a duration of snoring sounds based on an energy and the frequency response of the detected snoring sounds.

In one embodiment, the processing module is configured for using the head position detection device data and detected apnea events and detected hypopnea events to determine the number of apnea events and hypopnea events at different head positions.

In one embodiment, the processing module is configured for using the snoring information and head position information of a patient and report the severity and duration of snoring in every head position.

In one embodiment, the system includes a display showing the detected apnea events and hypopnea events, snoring severity at every head position along with the related information about a patient. In certain embodiments, a display of the relative respiratory airflow and snoring of a patient for the entire night with zoom in and out options, a display of

the recorded respiratory air signals, and snoring sounds and head position of the patient with zoom in and out options with the pathological events highlighted in a red color are provided.

In some embodiments, the processing module may connect to an interface for transmission of data to different locations.

In one embodiment, the display has airflow versus time plotted with apnea events and hypopnea events marked in the display.

In some embodiments, the display has snoring severity versus time plotted, snoring severity versus head position plotted, snoring duration versus time of sleep plotted, and snoring duration versus head position plotted for a patient. The display may also include oximetry data plotted in association with the estimated respiratory airflow for a patient.

In some embodiments, the display provides a display of apnea events and hypopnea events versus head positions for one or more patients.

In some embodiments, the display includes snoring severity and duration in association with the head position. The display may be capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window for airflow, snoring and oximetry data simultaneously for a patient.

In some embodiments, the display is capable of playing the breathing sounds, snoring sounds, and displaying monitored head positions in any zoomed-in or zoomed-out sub-window provided on the display for a patient.

In some embodiments, the display is capable of displaying the extracted information about the frequency and duration of apnea events and hypopnea events, and the association of the apnea events and the hypopnea events with the level of oximetry data in a separate window for a patient.

In some embodiments, the display is capable of displaying the extracted information about the frequency and duration of apnea events and hypopnea events, and the association of the apnea events and hypopnea events with the head position of a patient in a separate window for a clinician to review.

In yet another embodiment, the display is capable of displaying extracted information about the severity and duration of snoring sounds, and the snoring sounds association with the head position of a patient in a separate window for a clinician to review.

In some embodiments of the system, the sound detection device and/or the head detection device may be wireless.

In some embodiments, the system includes an additional sound detection device such as a microphone attached to the chest of a patient to collect lung sound signals from the patient.

In another embodiment of the invention, a method for analysis of breathing airflow of a patient during sleep includes detecting tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient by a sound detection device located on the neck of the patient and monitoring detected head position signals from a head position detection device to detect head positions of a patient. The method includes examining blood oxygen saturation of a patient for recording a blood oxygen saturation signal, and receiving and analyzing the tracheal respiratory sound signals in a processing module to generate airflow data corresponding to airflow of the patient during breathing cycles.

The method includes collecting and processing the tracheal respiratory sound signals in the processing module to generate snoring data corresponding to snoring characteristics of the patient. The method also includes obtaining and

examining the detected head position signals at the processing module to generate head position data. The method further includes evaluating the blood oxygen saturation signal to detect any changes in the blood oxygen saturation of the patient. Upon detection of a drop of the blood oxygen saturation of a patient that is greater than a predetermined level, the method may include ignoring during the drop of the blood oxygen saturation at least some of the tracheal respiratory sound signals when generating the airflow data.

In one embodiment, the method may have the sound signals used for calculating an index of snoring severity and duration of the patient.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display for displaying an estimated patient respiratory airflow relative to time of the patient.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display arranged to show the estimated patient respiratory airflow versus time in any desired time length being chosen by a user of the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display that is capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window shown on the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display that is capable of playing the captured breathing sounds of the patient in any data window.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display for displaying the detected snoring of the patient relative to the head position of the patient.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display arranged to display the detected snoring of a patient versus head position of a patient in any desired time length being chosen by a user of the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window shown on the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a display capable of playing the snoring sounds of the patient in any data window shown on the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a processing module arranged to calculate a function representing a range of a sound signal or entropy of the sound signal to provide an estimate of respiratory airflow of the patient during breathing cycles.

In one embodiment, the method may have a processing module arranged to calculate a function, wherein the function is the range of a sound signal which is defined as the log of the difference between minimum and maximum amplitudes of the sound signal within each predetermined short window of data.

In one embodiment, the method may have a processing module arranged to calculate a function using entropy which is defined by the following formula.

$$H(p) = - \sum_{i=1}^N p_i \log p_i,$$

where p_i is the probability distribution function of the i^{th} event, p is the probability distribution function of the tracheal sound amplitude. P is defined in N bins, which span the range of values from minimum of tracheal sound amplitude to the maximum of tracheal sound amplitude. P_i is the number of tracheal sound samples with values equal to its bin divided by total number of tracheal sound samples.

In one embodiment, the sound detection device is a microphone located in the ear of a patient.

In one embodiment, the method may have inspiration and expiration of a patient monitored by a smart program module which detects respiratory phases based on a relationship between sound duration and sound energy of successive breathing cycles.

In one embodiment, the method may have a processing module to calculate an estimate of respiratory airflow rate of a patient that is calibrated using a look-up table of previously measured airflow-sound relationship data which is sorted based on characteristics of patients. In certain embodiments, the characteristics in the look-up table may include ethnicity, body mass index ("BMI"), gender, height, neck circumference, and smoking history of the patient.

An alternative embodiment of a method for analysis of breathing airflow of a patient during sleep includes detecting tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient by a sound detection device located on or near the patient to generate sound data, receiving and evaluating the sound signals to generate airflow data relating to airflow of the patient during breathing cycles, and analyzing the sound signals to detect snoring of the patient.

The method further includes upon detection of snoring of the patient, ignoring during the snoring breathing cycle at least some of the sound signals in generating the sound data. The method may further generate information about the breathing airflow of the patient. In some embodiments, the information about the breathing airflow of the patient may be displayed on a display.

In one embodiment, the method may use a sound detector that measures the sound segments energy in decibels, the number of zero crossing rate ("ZCR") of the sound signals in each 20 ms window of data that is captured, and the first formant frequency of the sound signals to classify the sound segments into two groups of breath group and snore group.

In one embodiment, the method may utilize a Fisher Linear Discriminant ("FLD") module to transform the sound segments energy, ZCR, and first formant frequency into a new one-dimensional space and then minimize the Bayesian error to classify the sound segments as breath sound segments or snore sound segments.

In one embodiment, the method may process the snoring of a patient which occurs in only one of two successive respiratory phases of inhale and exhale. Sound signals from the other respiratory phase are used to estimate airflow of the patient in both of the two successive respiratory phases by deciding that the amount of inhaled air is equal to the amount of exhaled air of the patient.

In one embodiment, the method uses the sound signals for calculating an index of apnea events and hypopnea events.

In one embodiment, the method provides analysis of accelerometer signals generated by an accelerometer positioned on the patient's forehead to detect the head positions of a patient in a sagittal plane and a coronal plane.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display for displaying an estimated airflow of a patient relative to time. In certain embodiments, the estimated airflow of the patient versus time may be displayed in any desired time length being chosen by a user of the display.

In one embodiment, the display is capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window of the display. Moreover, in certain embodiments the display is capable of playing the sound signals of a patient in any data window shown on the display.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display for displaying detected snoring sounds of a patient relative to

time. In some embodiments, the display is arranged to display the detected snoring of the patient versus time in any desired time length chosen by a user of the display.

In some embodiments, the display is capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window of the display and/or playing the snoring sounds of a patient in any data window of the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a processing module arranged to detect an index of apnea events and hypopnea events.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display for a display of duration and frequency of apnea and hypopnea events versus head position of the patient.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display to display the duration and frequency of apnea and hypopnea events in any desired time length and/or head position of the patient being chosen by a user of the display.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display that is capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window shown on the display.

In one embodiment, the method may have a processing module arranged to estimate severity and duration of snoring sounds of a patient. Severity of snoring sounds may be estimated based on the sound energy and sound frequency components of snoring sounds of a patient.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display to display duration and severity of snoring sounds versus head position of a patient.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display to display the duration and severity of snoring sounds in any desired time length and/or head position of a patient that is chosen by a user of the display.

In one embodiment, the method may provide a display capable of zoom-in and zoom-out functions in the same window of the display.

The present invention and its attributes and advantages will be further understood and appreciated with reference to the detailed description below of presently contemplated embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The preferred embodiments of the invention will be described in conjunction with the appended drawings provided to illustrate and not to limit the invention, where like designations denote like elements, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system for analyzing respiratory airflow of a patient during sleep according to one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a flow chart illustrating a method for analyzing respiratory airflow of a patient according to one embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 3 is a schematic of a computer system for implementing the methods of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

FIG. 1 illustrates a system 10 for analyzing airflow of a patient 12 during sleep according to one embodiment of the present invention. The system 10 includes a sound detection device 14 positioned on or near the patient 12. The sound detection device 14 may be one or more microphones or other devices that capture sounds of the patient 12. The sounds may be breathing sounds, heart sounds, lung sounds, etc. of a patient. A user of the system preferably positions the

sound detection device **14** on the suprasternal notch of the trachea of the patient **12** while the patient **12** is sleeping.

The system **10** also includes a head position detection device **16**. The head position detection device **16** determines the head position of the patient **12**. In certain embodiments, an accelerometer may determine the head positions of a patient **12**. The accelerometer may be placed on the forehead of the patient **12** while the patient is undergoing testing.

The system **10** further includes a blood oxygen saturation detection device **18**. The blood oxygen saturation detection device **18** detects the blood oxygen saturation of the patient **12**. In certain embodiments, the blood oxygen saturation of the patient **12** may be detected at set time periods or during each breathing cycle of the patient. In some embodiments, a finger probe may be as the blood oxygen saturation detection device **18**. Moreover, any of the detection devices **14**, **16**, and **18** may be configured to perform a measurement on the patient **12** based on one of the other detection devices **14**, **16**, and **18** performing a measurement on the patient **12**.

The detection devices **14**, **16**, and **18** provide inputs to a processing module **20** for further processing by the system **10**. Processing module **20** is shown as a single entity, however it is envisioned that the processing module **20** can be formed of multiple modules. In some embodiments, the detection devices **14**, **16**, and **18** may have a wireless connection to the processing module **20**.

The processing module **20** is configured to receive sound detection data for the sound detection device **14** and head position data from the head position detection device **16**. The processing module **20** further receives blood oxygen saturation data from the blood oxygen saturation detection device **18**. The various sound selection data, head position data, and blood oxygen saturation data are further processed by the processing module **20** to provide information to a user of the system **10**.

In certain embodiments, the system **10** may include a display **22** which is connected to the processing module **20**. The display **22** may be wirelessly connected to the processing module **20**, and may be a smart phone, tablet, or any other hand-held computing device that is configured to display output from a computing device.

FIG. 2 shows one embodiment of a method **200** for analysis of breathing airflow of a patient during sleep and includes detecting tracheal sound signals of the patient by a sound detection device located on or near the patient to generate sound data at step **202**. Next, the method **200** has a step **204** of receiving and evaluating the sound signals to generate airflow data relating to airflow of the patient during breathing cycles. After step **204**, the method **200** includes analyzing the sound signals to detect snoring of the patient at step **206**. Upon detection of snoring of the patient, the method **200** includes ignoring during the snoring breathing cycle at least some of the sound signals when generating the sound data at step **208**. The method **200** may provide information about the patient breathing airflow at step **210** and then end.

FIG. 3 illustrates an exemplary computer system **300**, or network architecture, that may be used to implement the methods according to the present invention. One or more computer systems **300** may carry out the methods presented herein as computer code. One or more processors, such as processor **304**, which may be a special purpose or a general-purpose digital signal processor, is connected to a communications infrastructure **306** such as a bus or network. Computer system **300** may further include a display interface **302**, also connected to communications infrastructure **306**, which forwards information such as graphics, text, and

data, from the communication infrastructure **306** or from a frame buffer (not shown) to display unit **330**. Computer system **300** also includes a main memory **305**, for example random access memory ("RAM"), read-only memory ("ROM"), mass storage device, or any combination thereof. Computer system **300** may also include a secondary memory **310** such as a hard disk drive **312**, a removable storage drive **314**, an interface **320**, or any combination thereof. Computer system **300** may also include a communications interface **324**, for example, a modem, a network interface (such as an Ethernet card), a communications port, a PCMCIA slot and card, wired or wireless systems, etc.

It is contemplated that the main memory **305**, secondary memory **310**, communications interface **324**, or a combination thereof function as a computer usable storage medium, otherwise referred to as a computer readable storage medium, to store and/or access computer software and/or instructions.

Removable storage drive **314** reads from and/or writes to a removable storage unit **315**. Removable storage drive **314** and removable storage unit **315** may indicate, respectively, a floppy disk drive, magnetic tape drive, optical disk drive, and a floppy disk, magnetic tape, optical disk, to name a few.

In alternative embodiments, secondary memory **310** may include other similar means for allowing computer programs or other instructions to be loaded into the computer system **300**, for example, an interface **320** and a removable storage unit **322**. Removable storage unit **322** and interface **320** allows software and instructions to be transferred from the removable storage unit **322** to the computer system **300** such as a program cartridge and cartridge interface (such as that found in video game devices), a removable memory chip (such as an EPROM, or PROM) and associated socket, etc.

Communications interface **324** allows software and instructions to be transferred between the computer system **300** and external devices. Software and instructions transferred by the communications interface **324** are typically in the form of signals **325** which may be electronic, electromagnetic, optical or other signals capable of being received by the communications interface **324**. Signals **325** are provided to communications interface **324** via a communications path **326**. Communications path **326** carries signals **325** and may be implemented using wire or cable, fiber optics, a phone line, a cellular phone link, a Radio Frequency ("RF") link or other communications channels.

Computer programs, also known as computer control logic, are stored in main memory **305** and/or secondary memory **310**. Computer programs may also be received via communications interface **324**. Computer programs, when executed, enable the computer system **300**, particularly the processor **304**, to implement the methods according to the present invention. The methods according to the present invention may be implemented using software stored in a computer program product and loaded into the computer system **300** using removable storage drive **314**, hard drive **312** or communications interface **324**. The software and/or computer system **300** described herein may perform any one of, or any combination of, the steps of any of the methods presented herein. It is also contemplated that the methods according to the present invention may be performed automatically, or may be invoked by some form of manual intervention.

The sound detection device **14**, head position detection device **16**, and blood oxygen saturation detection device **18** may connect to the system **300** at the communications path **326** and provide input **327** to the system **300**. However, it is

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envisioned that in other embodiments input 327 may be connected at other parts of the system 300 as is known to those skilled in the art.

The invention is also directed to computer products, otherwise referred to as computer program products, to provide software to the computer system 300. Computer products store software on any computer useable medium. Such software, when executed, implements the methods according to the present invention. Embodiments of the invention employ any computer useable medium, known now or in the future. Examples of computer useable mediums include, but are not limited to, primary storage devices (e.g., any type of random access memory), secondary storage devices (e.g., hard drives, floppy disks, CD ROMs, ZIP disks, tapes, magnetic storage devices, optical storage devices, Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems ("MEMS"), nanotechnological storage device, etc.), and communication mediums (e.g., wired and wireless communications networks, local area networks, wide area networks, intranets, etc.). It is to be appreciated that the embodiments described herein may be implemented using software, hardware, firmware, or combinations thereof.

The computer system 300, or network architecture, of FIG. 3 is provided only for purposes of illustration, such that the present invention is not limited to this specific embodiment. It is appreciated that a person skilled in the relevant art knows how to program and implement the invention using any computer system or network architecture.

The described embodiments above are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive, and the scope of the invention is not limited to the foregoing description. Those of skill in the art will recognize changes, substitutions and other modifications that will nonetheless come within the scope of the invention and range of the claims.

Each cited reference is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for analyzing breathing airflow of a patient during sleep, comprising:

a sound detection device configured to be located adjacent a suprasternal notch of a trachea of the patient for detecting tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient during a sleep event;

a SaO₂ detection device for detecting SaO₂ signals of the patient;

a head position detection device detecting head positions of the patient and generating head position data; and a processing module for receiving and analyzing both the tracheal respiratory sound signals and the SaO₂ signals, the processing module connected to the sound detection device, the SaO₂ detection device, and the head position detection device, the sound detection device measuring both a sound energy in decibels and a first formant frequency of each tracheal respiratory sound signal;

a fisher linear discriminant module configured to transform both the sound energy and the first formant frequency of each tracheal respiratory signal into a one-dimensional space, the fisher linear discriminant module further minimizing a Bayesian error of the one-dimensional space to classify each tracheal respiratory sound signal as a breathing sound signal or a snoring sound signal;

the processing module removing the snoring sound signals from the tracheal respiratory sound signals to produce filtered tracheal respiratory sound signals, and

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estimating a respiratory airflow rate of the filtered tracheal respiratory sound signals according to the following:

$$\log F_{est} = \frac{\bar{E}_s}{\bar{E}_{base}} \times \bar{a} \log E_s + \bar{b} - \bar{E}_s \times [\bar{a} \bar{E}_{base}] \times \log E_s + \bar{b},$$

where F_{est} is an estimated respiratory flow rate, E_s is tracheal sound energy in overlapping windows of a breath cycle, $\bar{a}$ is a patient parameter representing power of the tracheal respiratory sound signals and $\bar{b}$ is a patient parameter representing variations in tracheal anatomy producing the tracheal respiratory sound signals, $\bar{E}$ is an average of the tracheal sound energy, and $\bar{E}_{base}$ is tracheal sound energy in the breath cycle used for calibration, wherein the patient parameters are derived from at least one breath cycle of the patient;

the processing module further configured to calculate an entropy of the filtered tracheal respiratory sound signals according to the following:

$$H(p) = -\sum_{i=1}^n p_i \log p_i$$

wherein H is a probability distribution function of a sleep event, p is a probability distribution function of a tracheal sound amplitude, wherein p is defined in n bins with each bin spanning a range of values from a minimum tracheal sound amplitude to maximum tracheal sound amplitude, p_i is a number of tracheal sound samples with a value equal to the i^{th} bins divided by a total number of tracheal sound samples in the sleep event; and

the processing module using the estimated respiratory airflow rate and the entropy to determine apneas or hypopneas; and

a display showing the estimated respiratory airflow rate.

2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the display illustrates a plot of the estimated respiratory airflow rate versus time.

3. The system according to claim 1, wherein the display illustrates the apneas or the hypopneas.

4. The system according to claim 3, wherein the display illustrates a plot of a number of the apneas and the hypopneas versus head position.

5. The system according to claim 1 the processing module extracting heart sounds from the tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient.

6. The system according to claim 1, wherein the sound detection device is a microphone.

7. The system according to claim 1 further comprising an additional sound detection device configured to be attached to a chest of the patient for collecting lung sound signals of the patient.

8. The system according to claim 1, wherein the SaO₂ detection device is a finger probe.

9. The system according to claim 1, wherein the head position detection device is an accelerometer configured to be placed on the forehead of the patient.

10. The system according to claim 1, wherein the apneas are defined as a reduction of more than 90% in an amplitude of the respiratory airflow rate from a baseline followed by a decrease in the SaO₂ signals.

11. The system according to claim 1, wherein the hypopneas are defined as a reduction of more than 50% in an amplitude of the respiratory airflow rate from a baseline followed by decrease in the SaO₂ signals $\geq 3\%$.

12. The system according to claim 1, wherein the processing module determines a snoring sound energy and a snoring sound frequency from the removed snoring sound signal to estimate a severity of the snoring sound signal and a duration of the snoring sound signal.

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13. The system according to claim 12 further comprising a head position detection device detecting head positions of the patient and the display illustrating one or more plots selected from the group comprising:

snoring severity versus time, snoring severity versus head position, snoring duration versus time, and snoring duration versus head position, both snoring severity and snoring duration versus time, both snoring severity and snoring duration versus head position.

14. A method for analyzing breathing airflow of a patient during sleep comprising:

placing a sound detection device for detecting tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient during a sleeping event adjacent to the suprasternal notch of the patient;

measuring by the sound detection device both a sound energy in decibels and a first formant frequency of each tracheal respiratory sound signal;

attaching to the patient an SaO₂ detection device for detecting SaO₂ levels of the patient;

placing on the head of the patient a head position detection device for detecting head positions of the patient and generating head position data;

collecting and analyzing the tracheal respiratory sound signals, SaO₂ levels, and head position data using a processing module;

transforming by a fisher linear discriminant module both the sound energy in decibels and the first formant frequency of each tracheal respiratory sound signal into a one-dimensional space;

minimizing by the fisher linear discriminant module a Bayesian error of the one-dimensional space to classify each tracheal respiratory sound signal as a breathing sound signal or a snoring sound signal;

removing by the processing module the snoring sound signal to produce filtered tracheal respiratory sound signals;

determining by the processing module breathing data from the filtered tracheal respiratory sound signals comprising a respiratory airflow rate of the patient, wherein the respiratory airflow rate of the patient is defined as:

$$\log \frac{F_{est}}{E_s + \bar{b}}, \log \frac{\bar{E}_s}{E_s + \bar{b}} \times \log \frac{E_s + \bar{b}}{\bar{E}_s} \times \log \frac{\bar{E}_s}{E_s + \bar{b}}$$

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where F_{est} is an estimated respiratory flow rate, E_s is tracheal sound energy in overlapping windows of a breath cycle, $\bar{a}$ is a patient parameter representing power of the tracheal respiratory sound signals and $\bar{b}$ is a patient parameter representing variations in tracheal anatomy producing the tracheal respiratory sound signals derived through a calibration process for each of the patient, $\bar{E}$ is an average of the tracheal sound energy, and E_{base} is tracheal sound energy in the breath cycle used for calibration,

calculating an entropy of the filtered tracheal respiratory sound signals defined according to the following:

$$H(p) = -\sum_{i=1}^n p_i \log p_i$$

wherein H is a probability distribution function of a sleep event, p is a probability distribution function of a tracheal sound amplitude defined by n bins with each bin spanning a range value from a minimum tracheal sound amplitude to a maximum tracheal sound amplitude, p_i is a number of tracheal sound samples with a value equal to the i^{th} bins divided by a total number of tracheal sound samples in the sleep event; and

detecting by the processing module, using the estimated respiratory airflow rate and the entropy, sleep apneas and hypopneas; and

reporting by the processing module the estimated respiratory flow rate and the sleep apneas and the hypopneas; and

displaying on a display one or more plots from said reporting step.

15. The method according to claim 14 further comprising: collecting lung sound signals of the patient by a microphone.

16. The method according to claim 14 further comprising: extracting heart sounds from the tracheal respiratory sound signals of the patient by the processing module.

17. The method according to claim 14 wherein the sleep apneas is defined as a reduction of more than 90% in an amplitude of the respiratory airflow rate from a baseline followed by a decrease in the SaO₂ signals and the hypopneas is defined as a reduction of more than 50% in an amplitude of the respiratory airflow rate from a baseline followed by decrease in an amplitude of the SaO₂ signals $\geq 3\%$.

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[标]申请(专利权)人(译)	KAZEM穆萨维ZAHRA YADOLLAHI AZADEH		
申请(专利权)人(译)	KAZEM - 穆萨维 , ZAHRA YADOLLAHI , AZADEH		
当前申请(专利权)人(译)	马尼托巴大学		
[标]发明人	KAZEM MOUSSAVI ZAHRA YADOLLAHI AZADEH		
发明人	KAZEM-MOUSSAVI, ZAHRA YADOLLAHI, AZADEH		
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摘要(译)

用于筛查疑似阻塞性睡眠呼吸暂停的患者的系统和方法。该系统包括：声音检测装置，配置用于检测患者的气管呼吸声信号；以及Sao₂检测装置，用于检测患者的SaO₂信号。该系统还具有用于在测试期间检测患者头部位置的头部位置检测装置，以及用于接收和分析气管呼吸声音信号以提取声音数据和Sao₂信号的处理模块。提取血氧饱和度数据。处理模块还接收并分析由头位置检测装置捕获的头位置信号，以产生头位置数据。该系统还可以包括显示器，用于显示关于由处理模块生成的各种数据的信息。

