



CANADIAN SOCIETY OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES THÉRAPEUTES RESPIRATOIRES

CSRT Position Statement The Respiratory Therapist's Role in Mechanical Ventilation

CSRT Position: **The CSRT strongly advocates for the involvement of a respiratory therapist in all therapeutic interventions pertaining to mechanical ventilation to optimize patient care, safety and best practice outcomes.**

In the interest of patient safety, the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists recommends that all health care organizations ensure that a respiratory therapist is available at all times to manage interventions pertaining to mechanical ventilation. The therapeutic management of a patient requiring mechanical ventilation (invasive or non-invasive) involves a fine balance of technical skills and clinical expertise. While other health care professionals have some of the knowledge to support ventilated patients, only the respiratory therapist has the depth of knowledge and expert ability required to blend technical skills with patient specific clinical requirements. Respiratory therapists should always be involved with the management of patients requiring mechanical ventilation in order to provide effective and safe care.

Respiratory therapists are experts in the field of cardio-respiratory care and work collaboratively with other health care professionals in order to optimize mechanical ventilation. This applies to patients requiring life support in intensive care settings as well as long term ventilation in the community. In acute situations ventilator associated lung injury can occur in as many as 24% of patients⁽¹⁾ and can lead to harmful sequelae such as acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and death. Providing safe and effective ventilation utilizing timely, lung protective strategies, is of the utmost importance for patient safety. Respiratory therapists **must** be involved in order to achieve positive outcomes in this regard.⁽²⁾ In addition, weaning from mechanical ventilation has been shown to be expedited by using respiratory therapist driven protocols.^(3,4,5,6,7) Faster weaning has been shown to decrease the incidence of hospital acquired infections such as ventilator associated pneumonia (VAP), decreased lengths of stay as well as cost savings.⁽⁸⁾ Respiratory therapists, in collaboration with the health care team,⁽⁹⁾ are essential for implementation of evidenced based practices that improve patient safety. An example of this is the daily evaluation for readiness for extubation component of the VAP bundle from Safer Healthcare Now.⁽⁸⁾ Long term ventilation in the community also carries risk since patients and their families must be properly educated and supported to manage daily care and emergency situations. Respiratory therapists are the most qualified health care providers to educate these families and support patients in long term care and community settings.

All health care professionals today recognize the need for specialized care and respiratory

therapists have the distinction of being the only member of the health care team specifically educated and trained in the application of mechanical ventilation. The education programs for respiratory therapists include over 300 hours of didactic and laboratory instruction dealing exclusively with mechanical ventilation and specialized technical instruction on topics such as ventilator waveform analysis. The theory component of respiratory therapy education is followed by extensive guided clinical training in acute and chronic settings which include all patient populations and have an emphasis on critical care medicine. A newly licensed graduate has participated on average in over 800 hours of education specific to mechanical ventilation in all health care environments and contexts.⁽¹⁰⁾

The CSRT and its members are committed to optimal respiratory care and believe that the respiratory therapist's involvement in all interventions pertaining to mechanical ventilation will contribute to safe and ethical patient care and will ensure the best possible health outcomes for patients.

All individuals regardless of their situation, environment or age should have access to the best healthcare possible. Respiratory Therapists possess the skills, knowledge and expertise in the clinical application of mechanical ventilation and provide safe, effective care. They are the most qualified healthcare professional for those who require ventilatory support. All organizations responsible for ventilated patients should employ respiratory therapists to optimize patient care.

About the CSRT

The CSRT is the national professional association representing approximately 3,500 respiratory therapists across Canada. The CSRT is also the credentialing agency for RTs who practice in non-regulated jurisdictions and administers the accreditation process for respiratory therapy education programs.

This Position Statement was approved by the Board of Directors of the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists on June 1, 2013

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