



Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: How Respiratory Therapists Can Shrink Their Environmental Footprint

Presenter: Rebecca Chery, GRT

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Session Abstract

The climate crisis has and will continue to require societal innovation and change to mitigate its negative effects. One major contributing factor of the ongoing climate crisis is environmental waste management. Currently Canada is behind in its waste management practices in comparison to international peer countries, ranking 15 out of 17 for overall environmental performance and last for municipal waste generation. Healthcare facilities, which are in the non-residential category of waste production, account for 59% of waste for disposal in Canada. Of that, 85% is non-hazardous waste and 15% is hazardous waste material. The respiratory therapy field is one contributor to the generation of this non-hazardous waste. Consequently, there is a growing need for the development of updated protocols regarding the eco-conscious reduction, reuse and recycling of materials and packaging in this field wherever possible. The purpose of this presentation is to review current research on methods of medical waste management and recycling practices in various hospitals in the Western world. This literature includes current outcome focused techniques as well as future recommendations and their feasibility for respiratory therapy departments. Due to the disposable nature and high volume of equipment and packaging in respiratory therapy departments, RTs have a responsibility to consider and reduce environmental impact. Based on the recommendations from the literature consulted there are various options that can and should be implemented in Canadian hospitals, clinics and offices. These recommendations include staff education and training; accurate information regarding the cost benefits of waste reduction; and the potential deployment of reusable equipment and recyclable materials. By virtue of their “nomadic” nature within the workplace, respiratory therapists are in a unique position to act as liaisons and ambassadors for promoting such initiatives.

Session Objectives

1. To review Canada's current waste management practices
2. To discuss the development of updated protocols regarding reduction, reuse and recycling of materials & packaging associated with respiratory therapy equipment
3. To identify areas for improvement in waste management strategies, policies and practices within the field of respiratory therapy

Speaker Biography

Rebecca attended respiratory therapy school at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary Alberta; graduating class of 2020. She served as a campus CSRT representative and has been lucky enough to attend the CSRT conference every year since her first year of RT school. Ever since the conference in Vancouver presenting at the CSRT has been a goal of hers. Rebecca is now employed and working at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon, SK as a graduate respiratory therapist.