



CANADIAN SOCIETY OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES THÉRAPEUTES RESPIRATOIRES

Position Statement

Unregulated Administration of Oxygen

The Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists strongly rejects the unregulated administration of oxygen and use by those who do not require oxygen to improve their physiological status.

As health professionals, respiratory therapists cannot ethically or morally support providing oxygen therapy to those who do not require it.

Oxygen is predominantly administered to individuals who have lower than normal levels of oxygen. In this instance, it is therapeutically used to decrease the workload of the heart and lungs.⁽¹⁾ Oxygen is carried throughout the body within the bloodstream. It is primarily carried by hemoglobin. In healthy individuals, breathing additional oxygen will not provide substantially more oxygen to the body.⁽²⁾ There is no proven benefit associated with the administration of oxygen if blood oxygen levels are normal.⁽¹⁾

There is a possible risk of 'oxygen toxicity' occurring in patients who inspire high oxygen concentrations. Oxygen toxicity causes damage to the capillary and endothelial lining of the lungs. This condition may lead to the inability of the lungs to further carry oxygen and worsen the oxygenation status. It is therefore imperative that oxygen therapy is performed and monitored by a regulated health care professional who is trained in this area of expertise.⁽²⁾

An additional concern rises when oxygen is passed through colorant or flavouring devices. These have the potential to act as a serious lung irritant in asthmatic and allergic individuals.

Respiratory therapists are the experts in safe oxygen administration and provide guidance and collaboration with other health care professionals in regards to the application, titration and discontinuation of oxygen.⁽²⁾ Oxygen is typically administered by prescription or medically approved protocols.⁽³⁾

The Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists strongly advocates stringent regulations of this industry.

About the CSRT

The Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists is the national professional association for respiratory therapists. The Society also serves as the credentialing body for respiratory therapists in non-regulated jurisdictions and administers the accreditation of respiratory therapy education programs in Canada.

Approval by CSRT Board of Directors

The original statement entitled “Oxygen Bars” was approved by the Board of Directors of the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists in June 1998.

This revised position statement replaces the June 1998 position statement and was approved by the CSRT Board of Directors in March 2012.

References:

- (1) O’Driscoll BR, Howard LS, Davison AG. British Thoracic Society, Guideline for Emergency Oxygen Use in Adult Patients. Thorax – Journal of the British Thoracic Society 2008:63(Supplement VI), accessed in March 2012 from http://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/Portals/0/Guidelines/Emergency%20oxygen%20guideline/THX-63-Suppl_6.pdf
- (2) Wilkins, RL, Stoller, JK, Kacmarek, R.M. et al. Egan’s Fundamentals of Respiratory Care 2009: 9th Edition. St. Louis: Mosby Elsevier.
- (3) Lynes D, Kelly C. Long-Term, Ambulatory and Short-Burst Oxygen Therapy in the Community. Primary Health Care 2009:19(6):40-45.