



New Brunswick Association of Respiratory Therapists

Title: Spirometry Testing by Respiratory Therapists

Number: NBART PS-003

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Position Statement

MISSION AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The mission of the New Brunswick Association of Respiratory Therapists is to maintain and advance the standard of Respiratory Therapy in New Brunswick. We fulfill this mission by governing and regulating Respiratory Therapy services in New Brunswick, creating awareness of the practice of Respiratory Therapy, facilitating access to continuing education and promoting the role of Respiratory Therapy in providing safe, ethical care to the public.

Definition

Spirometry is the most common of the pulmonary function tests (PFTs) used for measuring lung function, specifically the amount (volume) and/or speed (flow) of air that can be inhaled and exhaled. Spirometry is performed using a device called a spirometer.

Position

- The NBART believes that Registered Respiratory Therapists (RRTs) holding active licenses to practice in New Brunswick have the knowledge, skill and clinical judgment to perform spirometry testing in all situations where it would be appropriate for the ongoing care of a patient/client.
- Spirometry testing must be performed in a setting with a regular quality assurance program.
- Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) guidelines for “Spirometry in the primary care” must be followed at all times.
- All spirometry tests must meet American Thoracic Society (ATS)/European Respiratory Society (ERS) standards.

Background

CTS guidelines specify that spirometry should be used to diagnose Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Asthma. Spirometry is not controlled under medical service regulations and therefore there are no legal restrictions on who can perform the testing. Given the high rate of occurrence of these diseases within New Brunswick, it is in the public’s best interest to have trained and qualified

personnel readily available to perform spirometry testing. Bedside spirometry is a common and useful assessment and diagnostic tool used frequently by Respiratory Therapists in all settings. Although diagnosis of a pathology must be done by a physician, assessment of ongoing treatments and interventions is often the responsibility of the Respiratory Therapist. The NBART uses the 2016 Respiratory Therapy National Competency Framework to determine scope of practice and spirometry testing is an integral part of a RRT's entry to practice requirements. (Ref. 2016 Respiratory Therapy National Competency Framework).

Facts

- RRT's in NB are trained and qualified to perform and interpret spirometry tests in all areas of health care without the need for medical orders.
- The subsequent diagnosis and changes to the delivery of care of the patient/client must be done with the input and advice of the multi-disciplinary team including but not limited to the attending physician.
- It is important to note that employers may have policies related to an RRT's authority to perform spirometry testing. If an employer's policies are more restrictive than the NBART's expectations, the RRT must abide by the employer's policies. Where an employer's policies are more permissive than the expectations of the NBART, the RRT must adhere to the expectations of the NBART.

References

Coates AL, Graham BL, McFadden RG, McParland C, Moosa D, Provencher S, et al. Spirometry in primary care. *Can Respir J* 2013;20(1):13-21.

M.R. Miller, J. Hankinson, V. Brusasco, F. Burgos, R. Casaburi, A. Coates, R. Crapo, P. Enright, C.P.M. van der Grinten, P. Gustafsson, R. Jensen, D.C. Johnson, N. MacIntyre, R. McKay, D. Navajas, O.F. Pedersen, R. Pellegrino, G. Viegi and J. Wanger. Standardisation of spirometry. *Eur Respir J* 2005; 26: 319–338.