



Ontario Home
Respiratory Services
Association

NEWS RELEASE

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ONTARIO OXYGEN VENDORS SHOCKED BY LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOME OXYGEN PROGRAM BY THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S OFFICE

Toronto, ON - The Ontario Home Respiratory Services Association (OHRSA) was shocked by the review the Home Oxygen Program (HOP) received from the Auditor General's Office today. The position taken by the Auditor highlights a fundamental gap between perception and the realities of the services being provided to Ontario patients via the program.

Foremost was the assessment that the HOP payment for the provision of an oxygen concentrator to Ontarians with COPD was for equipment rental only (as it is in some provinces). In fact the payment is for much more. For \$389, or \$13 per day, an Ontario patient is also provided with:

- Home oxygen set up on the same day it is prescribed in order to expedite a patient's discharge from hospital
- Emergency service with health care professionals and medical gas service technicians who are on call, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week
- Client and family education and training programs and a client centered respiratory plan of care including how to use their equipment. These programs include in-home demonstrations, hands-on orientation, written instruction, videos and modality specific checklists
- Emergency back-up systems for replacement 24 hours per day
- Ongoing reports to the client's physician regarding their progress, and the vendor maintains records for each client
- Technical service involving preventative maintenance set by manufacturers' recommendations, as well as general repair services

Within this amount home oxygen therapy providers also provide a comprehensive equipment inventory to ensure the most appropriate equipment is being used to meet the needs of all clients. This includes the continual evaluation and offering of leading edge technologies (e.g. portable concentrators and liquid oxygen systems). Additionally, home oxygen therapy providers must have access to a sophisticated communications system to minimize response time.

“The provision of home oxygen is a labour-intensive and time-consuming process and service,” said Heather Nicolson-Morrison, CEO of OHRSA. “To compare it to simple purchasing and servicing of an oxygen concentrator shows the auditor’s office does not understand the complexity of the service provided. Ontario’s home oxygen providers don’t simply drop a machine off at the client’s door and leave.”

Home oxygen therapy enables these very sick individuals to remain independent in their homes for \$13 per day, rather than in our over stressed hospitals for \$1,000 per day. Long term oxygen therapy has been proven, in controlled clinical trials, to extend life and quality of life for severe lung disease patients.

The Auditor’s review also mistakenly challenges the periodic assessment of clients. Client reassessments are conducted at 3 and 12 months following therapy initiation which in fact saves money as it ensures that only clients needing chronic oxygen therapy are receiving continued funding. In fact the retesting saves an estimated \$15 million per year. These assessments were proposed and implemented by the home oxygen service providers.

Patients with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) can be safely supported at home with oxygen and clinical support, at a cost of about \$13 per day. In its 2005 National COPD Report Card, the Canadian Lung Association gave Ontario the highest score of any province, and cited its funded Home Oxygen Program as a key strength.

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