



SCRT Position Statement

Off-label use of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

SCRT Position:

The Saskatchewan College of Respiratory Therapists (SCRT) strongly rejects the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy for “off-label” or unapproved conditions and strongly advocates stringent regulation and medical oversight of all hyperbaric oxygen therapy centres.

Background:

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) is an established medical therapy used to treat specific medical conditions. It involves the inhalation of 100% oxygen while the patient is in a chamber pressurized above 2 atmospheres. The increased pressure raises the level of oxygen dissolved in plasma by 10-13 times and produces a number of specific beneficial effects.

There are currently fourteen (14) indications approved for treatment with HBOT in Canada. Most treatments are provided on an outpatient basis for problem wounds (mainly diabetic ulcers) and for complications of radiation treatments. However, some patients require HBOT in a hospital setting with critical care to support mechanical ventilation, anaesthetic drugs, IV therapy, and cardiovascular monitoring. This would include conditions such as carbon monoxide poisoning or severe sepsis.

The current list of approved HBOT indications includes:

- Air or gas embolism
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Clostridial myositis and myonecrosis
- Crush injury or compartment syndrome
- Decompression sickness
- Arterial insufficiencies
 - Central retinal artery occlusion
 - Enhanced healing in problem wounds
- Severe anemia
- Intracranial abscess
- Necrotizing soft tissue infections
- Osteomyelitis – chronic refractory
- Delayed radiation injury
- Compromised grafts and flaps
- Acute thermal burn injury
- Idiopathic sensorineural hearing loss

Rationale for opposing 'off-label' uses:

HBOT is not an approved treatment for cancer, autism, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, spinal cord injury, stroke, or many other clinically unproven conditions. Unfounded claims made by treatment centers using HBOT for **unapproved conditions** may give consumers a wrong impression that could ultimately endanger their health.

Patients may be led to believe that HBOT has been proven safe and effective for unapproved uses, which may cause them to delay or forgo proven medical therapies. In doing so, they may experience a lack of improvement and/or worsening of their existing condition, as well as being exposed to unnecessary risks and side-effects of hyperbaric oxygen treatments. In addition, the cost of unnecessary treatments may pose a significant financial burden for patients and their families.

As health professionals, respiratory therapists cannot ethically support providing hyperbaric oxygen therapy to a patient who does not have an approved medical indication. The Saskatchewan College of Respiratory Therapists strongly advocates stringent regulation and medical oversight of all hyperbaric oxygen therapy centres.

About SCRT:

SCRT (*Saskatchewan College of Respiratory Therapists*) is the provincial college regulating the Respiratory Therapists of Saskatchewan. All Registered Respiratory Therapists working in Saskatchewan must belong to Saskatchewan College of Respiratory Therapists.

Further information:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/hyper-eng.php>

<https://www.uhms.org/resources/hbo-indications.html>

<http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm364687.htm>

**Approved by the Council of the Saskatchewan College of Respiratory Therapists
on March 25, 2015.**