

Ohio Respiratory Care Board

**Position Statements on Practice**

**Prescription or other order requirements for  
pulse oximetry when used to assess or evaluate  
patient care**

Original position issued: August 14, 2006

Reconsidered: October 16, 2006

It is the Board's position that pulse oximetry does not necessarily require a prescription or order pursuant the Section 4761.17 of the Revised Code when used as an assessment measure while engaged in respiratory care practice.

Position:

In response to inquiries asking if a physician prescription or order is required in each and every instance a therapist performs this procedure, the Board finds no support for the supposition that it is required. Pulse Oximetry is routinely performed by respiratory therapists to evaluate blood oxygen saturation. When ordered by a recognized prescriber under Section 4761.17 of the Revised Code, pulse oximetry aids in the diagnosis of hypoxia or monitors blood oxygen saturation. Pulse oximetry is also used by respiratory care providers without an order or prescription by a recognized prescriber under Section 4761.17 of the Revised Code. When used in this manner, pulse oximetry is performed in the course of a general cardiopulmonary assessment or post treatment evaluation, coupled with other assessment measures (i.e., pulse, breath sounds, skin pallor or cyanosis, and respiratory rate) and not as a stand alone diagnostic or monitoring procedure. Pulse oximetry use has become a standard of care in the respiratory care profession. To restrict the practice of respiratory care in such a way as to require physician or nurse prescription in each and every instance pulse oximetry is used as an assessment measure would interfere with the performance of the practice of respiratory care and unreasonably burden the prescriber who expects qualified therapists to employ their knowledge and skills to benefit of the patient and other care givers.

Background:

O.R.C. 4761.17 requires respiratory therapist to practice respiratory care only pursuant to a prescription or order for respiratory care issued by a physician or by a registered nurse who holds a certificate of authority issued under Chapter 4723 of the Revised Code to practice as a nurse practitioner or clinical nurse specialist and has entered into a standard

care arrangement with a physician. O.R.C. 4761.01 defines “Respiratory Care” as rendering or offering to render to individuals, groups, organization, or the public any service involving the evaluation of cardiopulmonary function, the treatment of cardiopulmonary impairment, the assessment of treatment effectiveness, and the care of patients with deficiencies and abnormalities associated with the cardiopulmonary system. Respiratory therapists perform therapeutic and diagnostic procedures pursuant to an order or prescription by a recognized prescriber under Section 4761.17 of the Revised Code. In addition, respiratory therapists perform patient assessment and evaluation measures within the scope of their skills and competency as part of the practice of respiratory care. A prescription or order for assessment and evaluation is not always specified. Contrarily, such measures are expected.