



NHOPA NEWS

National Home Oxygen Patients Association

Volume 10, Number 7

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**Have you returned your annual membership dues?
Send it in today so that you stay in the know about NHOPA!**

OXYGEN OWNERSHIP

IMMEDIATE CALL TO ACTION NEEDED!

The House of Representatives has taken action that seriously threatens the **availability of portable oxygen equipment**. The action also mandates that oxygen users **accept ownership of their devices after 18 months of continuous use**, not the 36 months mandated by Congress two years ago. If enacted as the House of Representatives recommends, these changes will take effect January 1, 2008.

Background: Two key House Committees have recommended that the payment window for stationary oxygen systems be reduced from 36 months to 18 months. This is regarded as a compromise, as the Inspector General of HHS had recommended a cut to 13 months. **Importantly, the Inspector General recommended this adjustment for stationary systems only.** However, the way the legislation is drafted it includes some portable oxygen systems, most notably liquid systems. NHOPA believes that if this legislation becomes law, suppliers will likely stop providing lightweight oxygen systems as the payment by Medicare will not cover acquisition costs.

The NHOPA Board strongly believes that all **portable** systems, including portable oxygen concentrators, transfill systems, liquid systems and lightweight portable systems should be kept at the 36 month payment threshold. **This is in accordance with the recommendations of the HHS Inspector General.**

The NHOPA Board also believes that transfer of ownership from the oxygen supplier to the Medicare beneficiary is

unacceptable. Such a transfer of ownership places patients at risk for maintaining medical devices when they lack expertise to do so, it creates an illegal gray market for FDA approved devices in terms of use after medical necessity ends and, as we understand it, puts an impossible burden on device manufacturers to keep track of devices in the event of recall, replacement, required maintenance, etc.

Recommendation: Write to your two Senators immediately, and urge everyone you know. E-mail is preferred but a fax is also acceptable. Phone calls to Senate offices are also encouraged. **Do not write letters to be delivered by the postal service as time is of the essence.**

Here is the message:

1. Identify yourself by name and age and that you use oxygen.
2. The House of Representatives has approved legislation (HR3162) that is intended to reduce payment for stationary equipment, but it would make access to some portable oxygen systems nearly impossible.
3. The House has also taken action to expedite ownership transfer of oxygen systems to patients after 18 months of continuous use. We believe that responsibility for these FDA approved devices should lie with the supplier, not with the patient.
4. As a member of the National Home Oxygen Patients Association, please make sure that any action taken by the Senate related to Medicare guarantees that all portable systems continue to be paid for 36 months and that ownership transfer is repealed.

How to get the message to your Senators:

1. If you have access to the Internet, go to www.senate.gov and click on "Senators" to find your senators. This will provide a list of all 100 senators with phone numbers and links to the Senators' websites. Those websites provide fax, phone and e-mail information.
2. If you don't have Internet access, you may call the Senate switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Senator's office.
3. If you want to speak with someone, ask for the health staff person who is responsible for Medicare and, in your own words, provide the message above.
4. If you would rather send a fax, simply ask for the fax number.
5. If you want to send an e-mail, ask for the e-mail address for the Senator or the health staff person responsible for Medicare.

Take action immediately as time is of the essence. Contact your Senator today!

Travel Feedback

Audrey Zirbel wrote the following letter in 2006 regarding travel to Puerto Vallarta with Medic-Air. The Newsletter recently ran across it and saw value for our readers.

"Most oxygen users welcome the opportunity to travel on airlines again. Many thanks to NHOPA for their stick-to-it-ness for

National Home Oxygen Patients Association

8618 Westwood Center Drive Suite 210

Vienna, VA 22182-2222

1-888-646-7244

ExecOffice@homeoxygen.org

www.homeoxygen.org

The National Home Oxygen Patients Association is devoted exclusively to improving the lives of people across the country who require supplementary oxygen on a regular basis.

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Newsletter Editor

Stephanie Diehl, RRT	Littleton, CO
stefmistr@aol.com	

10 years rattling the Federal Government on the importance in assisting, in some measure, persons with medical conditions/disabilities.

I became an oxygen user mid-2004. Taking short car trips within our state during summer worked out well using medical equipment provided to me.

However, at the end of January, 2005, it was a shocker to learn that our favorite airline did not accept POCs on board, nor did they provide oxygen for the 2½ hour direct flight to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. My husband contacted another airline that provided oxygen for a fee. [With this airline] there was to be a 2½ hour lay over, along with [a plane change] in Texas. We would have to hire a private oxygen provider for lay-over usage and another usage fee would be charged on the second plane. Adding up the oxygen, round trip on the plane was too costly and nearly seven hours of travel time. We gave up our vacation at an apartment, which we have enjoyed for the past 15 years.

With the approval of POCs on most commercial planes, year 2006 has become very exciting for us. US Airways accepts POCs. Immediately, my husband contacted the airline, explained I would be using an Inogen One, and carrying along 4 batteries. After obtaining their medical authorization form we contacted, by email, our newly found provider in Puerto Vallarta, and provided them the following information: vacation address, length of stay, medical equipment and oxygen needed, arrival date and time.

[On the day of travel] upon passing security we inquired as to availability of an electrical outlet near our gate allowing plug in to keep battery charged during our 90 minute wait until boarding. No problem, outlet was available. Boarding and flight went smoothly and I used one (1) battery during the flight.

Puerto Vallarta airport [was] in process of remodeling, therefore, planes do not park close to the terminal upon landing, and passengers are shuttled by bus to the terminal approximately 6 blocks away. Another passenger and I rode in separate wheelchairs, commandeered by US Airways staff members. My escort must have at one time been a marathon runner as he kept up with the 2 buses. I was in customs before my husband, who rode the bus with 220 other passengers. Upon clearing customs and

retrieving our luggage we met our oxygen provider, Dr. Aldo F. Seimandi, owner of a hospital called Medic-Air.

We were driven to our apartment, and oxygen and supplies which we ordered earlier had already been delivered there. Medic-Air personnel called several times during our stay to inquire if all was well.

Medic-Air drove us back to the airport for our return flight. US Airways staff were helpful and knowledgeable with regard to oxygen users, and with Medic-Air's professional staff this was a very relaxed R & R. Should POC [users] be interested in vacationing in Puerto Vallarta, Medic-Air would be a reliable home care provider to contact. They can be reached by telephone (52) (329) 296 54 44 or by email at medicair@prodigy.net.mx."

Audrey thanks for feedback on your travel. Medic-Air's website is www.medicair.com.mx.

Questions & Comments

Angela Church wrote "It would be great if people could send in hints they found to help us who walk around all day with the hose connected to us. I myself find I get tangled around anything. At times it takes me two trips to get where I want to go because I have to come back and untangle my hose. Any hints would be great for us especially now we can travel by plane without paying outrageous prices. Keep up the good work. I look forward to getting my newsletter."

Angela thanks for your letter. We hope that you have found hints in previous newsletter helpful such as the use of swivels to keep your oxygen lines from getting tangled. Perhaps the following tip might give you some more ideas.

Rev Ronald Johnstad writes "If you want to golf, etc. with oxygen flowing, get yourself a Camelbak pack . . . large mans size. Slide your hose up the front of your pack on one side – cut a couple holes to get it inside your pack and attach it to your flow adjustor (use a B cylinder). You can even carry an extra cylinder if you want. Slick! I have sent this information onto Camelbak."

Rev Johnstad thanks for the information on a handy way to tote about small compressed oxygen tanks. As a reminder, when using liquid oxygen and an enclosed pack, make sure there is adequate ventilation around the system

when placed in the pack. This decreases the likelihood of the inside becoming an oxygen rich environment due to venting of the unit. This oxygen rich environment may become a hazard if too close to open flames. (See April 2007 newsletter for more information)

The Newsletter received responses to Jack Norton's issue (July 07) regarding the electrical usage of his concentrator.

Colleen Stripling wrote "Our electric company gives us an increase in the baseline for use of the concentrator. [He] might contact his electric company for the necessary forms. This saves some money as the electricity is purchased at a lower rate. Recently I asked for an increase in baseline because I can no longer function well at much more than 72 degrees. With doctor's okay our baseline was increased to take into consideration the additional air conditioning required. It has resulted in substantial savings. If Mr. Norton itemizes his medical bills electrical charges for the concentrator are deductible."

Norton Gretzler writes "The watt usage of a concentrator is marked somewhere on the unit. Estimate how many hours per day the unit is used, convert to kilowatt hours, multiply by 365 for annual kilowatt usage; then multiply by the cost per kilowatt hour (from monthly electric bills) and you will have a medical deduction on your income tax return. It takes off some of the sting."

Colleen and Gretz thanks for your feedback. Make sure you talk with your accountant about your specific medical deductions.

New Products

The following information on new products/companies available on the market is for informational purposes only. NHOPA does not specifically endorse ANY products. Contact your physician for further information regarding your healthcare or the specific company for product information.

The Pulmonary Paper was the source for information on a new albuterol inhaler, **ProAir HFA**. This albuterol MDI uses HFA technology in compliance with the impending CFC ban. ProAir HFA, made by Teva Specialty Pharmaceuticals, has designed the inhaler boot red with an associated campaign. Visit the website at www.proairhfa.com to receive a voucher for a free canister and a money saving coupon on a ProAir HFA purchase.

National Home Oxygen Patients Association

8618 Westwood Center Drive, Suite 210

Vienna, VA 22182-2222

NHOPA MEMBERS, IT'S TIME TO STEP UP!

We are still in need of nominees for **3 three year term oxygen user member Board positions to be filled**. You may nominate yourself or an immediate family member. Simply submit, in writing (by email at ExecOffice@homeoxygen.org, by fax at 703-752-4360 or by mail) the name and relevant biographical information to the NHOPA Executive Office – All candidates must be NHOPA oxygen user members. **This is your opportunity to let your voice be heard!**

The NHOPA Board provides overall supervision for the management and direction of the association. Meetings are held via telephone conference call every other month. The NHOPA user members of the Board select the non-user members of the Board every year. All directors serve without compensation.

ANNUAL NHOPA MEETING

The Annual NHOPA Meeting is scheduled for **November 14, 2007 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time** via Conference Call. This meeting is just around the corner and we want YOU to be with us on that call. To participate or add an item to the agenda that you would like the Board to discuss, notify the Executive Office no later than November 1 via fax at 703-752-4360, by email at ExecOffice@homeoxygen.org or by phone a 1-888-646-7244. Participants will be provided with a toll free phone number and access code prior to November 14, 2007.

Come join us and see what NHOPA is doing for YOU!

I Didn't Know That.....

(received via email – anonymous)

Q: Why are many coin banks shaped like pigs?

A: Long ago, dishes and cookware in Europe were made of a dense orange clay called "pygg." When people saved coins in jars made of this clay, the jars became known as "pygg banks." When an English potter misunderstood the word, he made a bank that resembled a pig. And it caught on.

Q: Did you ever wonder why dimes, quarters and half dollars have notches, while pennies and nickels do not?

A: The US Mint began putting notches on the edges of coins containing gold and silver to discourage holders from shaving off small quantities of the precious metals. Dimes, quarters and half dollars are notched because they used to contain silver. Pennies and nickels aren't notched because the metals they contain are not valuable enough to shave.

For up-to-date information and membership applications go to www.homeoxygen.org