

NHOPA NEWS

National Home Oxygen Patients Association

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Pulmonary Rehabilitation - a Covered Medicare Benefit in 2010

Under the recently passed Medicare legislation - Public Law 110-275, the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008), a specific benefit for pulmonary rehabilitation was established. This benefit will take effect January 1, 2010 allowing CMS (The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) time to write regulations to implement coverage and payment rules. While some of our members may have previously participated in Medicare covered pulmonary rehabilitation programs, the coverage provision was regional. The new legislation establishes a nationwide benefit and a framework for national coverage of pulmonary rehabilitation.

What is Pulmonary Rehabilitation?

Generally, pulmonary rehabilitation (pulmonary rehab) is a multidisciplinary program that includes exercise and education classes for towards persons with lung disease and conducted over a set period, typically a period of [6-12] weeks.

The majority of the program consists of group exercise participation with others who have lung disease. The exercises may include stretching, walking, treadmills, stationary bicycles, light weights or weight machines. Each exercise program is specifically designed for the patient's ability. Participants are monitored by a Respiratory Therapist or nurse, during the exercise portion of the class while being taught how to exercise correctly. Studies have shown that during the program, participants increase in strength and cardiac fitness. As conditioning levels improve the body utilizes oxygen more efficiently leading to increasing periods of walk or exercise.

The education portion of the class varies according to program. The program may

include information on how lungs work and lung disease, exercise and how to perform activities with energy conservation so you may experience less shortness of breath, instruction on proper use of inhalers, proper breathing techniques, oxygen therapy, and nutrition and diet.

Speak with the program coordinator to find out the length and the details of a specific program.

Locating a Pulmonary Rehab Program

You can locate a pulmonary rehab program through several avenues. Speak with your physician or pulmonologist, contact a local pulmonary group, such as Better Breathers or call the Respiratory Therapy department at your local hospital.

Entrance into a pulmonary rehab program requires a prescription from your physician. Most programs help coordinate this process and can interact with your physician's office to obtain the necessary information. Entrance into a program may require testing before beginning classes to determine each person's baseline and to individualize their exercise program.

Smoking and Pulmonary Rehab

Some programs require you to stop smoking prior to entering while others provide you with tools to quit smoking while you are in the program. Check with the specific program for their requirements.

After Completion of Pulmonary Rehab

Once you have completed the program, you need to continue to exercise or the benefits you gained during the program may be lost. The pulmonary rehab staff will work with you to set up a maintenance program you can follow at the conclusion of your program. Many programs offer "maintenance" that allows you to continue

working out with others on the equipment offered during the program. However, little to no instruction or monitoring may be offered during maintenance program. Note that maintenance programs are not covered by Medicare.

Pulmonary rehab programs offer a wealth of information as well as an opportunity to increase conditioning, strength and fitness. Information gained during these programs should be incorporated in to daily life and used on a regular basis so that the benefits gained during pulmonary rehab become part of you lifestyle.

What if there is not a pulmonary rehab program nearby?

If a pulmonary rehab program is not convenient, there are several things you can do on your own. First, if you smoke, STOP. Your physician can assist you with medication, if needed, and local resources to contact. Several on-line resources are available to assist in this process. Check out www.smokefree.gov. On-line material is available for reading and printing as well as access to counselors. Second, get up and move – regularly! Be sure to speak with your physician before undertaking an exercise program. Once you have spoken with your physician, begin your exercise program slowly. The American Thoracic Society (<http://www.thoracic.org/sections/clinical-information/pulmonary-rehabilitation/patient-information/index.html>) provides a good at

home program with guidelines. Finally make sure you are taking your medication and inhalers correctly to receive the correct dosage to optimize your exercise program. On-line information on proper use of inhalers can be found at www.nationaljewish.org (search for inhalers) or through your physician.

The following websites were used as sources for the information in this article. www.thoracic.org, www.nationaljewish.org, and www.chestnet.org .

POC Comparisons

Many people request further comments or information on currently available portable oxygen concentrators (POCs). The Dec 2006/Jan 2007 Newsletter offered a comparison chart between the 5 POCs available at that time. This chart was provided by Tom Williams of Strategic Dynamics. Since that time, other POCs have become available. Tom is updating the comparison chart to include all currently available POCs. NHOPA will publish the updated version in the newsletter once it becomes available. We thank Tom and his staff for the diligent research that allows us to bring this up to date information to our members.

Dry Powder Inhalers

With the year-end CFC-free deadline approaching, talk has turned to dry powder inhalers (DPIs) for medication delivery. Below are some general guidelines for DPI use, however you should read the instruction sheet that accompanies your specific DPI.

- DPIs are breath activated. Medication is dispensed into the lungs during inhalation so it is important to take a deep and slow breath in when using a DPI.
- Do not blow into or exhale into the DPI. Blow out prior to placing your mouth on the mouthpiece to avoid blowing medication out of the DPI.
- Wipe the mouthpiece off once a week with a dry cloth. Some parts of some DPIs may be cleaned with water, however you should

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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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read your specific DPI instructions on what can be submersed in water.

- Store DPIs or DPI medications in a dry place or sealed packaging.
- Many DPIs use counters so that you will know when the unit is to be discarded. Read the directions included with your specific unit to know when the unit is getting low and when the unit is to be discarded. Many of the units will alert you with red numbers or indicators on the unit.

One on-line source that provides information on various types of DPIs currently available is www.nationaljewish.org. Search for “dry powder inhalers”. Remember if you have questions regarding your specific DPI ask your physician for more information.

New York COPD Conference and Patient Caregiver Symposium

On October 18, 2008 the American Thoracic Society, New York State Thoracic Society and American Lung Association of New York will hold a COPD Conference and Patient Caregiver Symposium at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Liverpool, New York, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The conference will kick off with a number of morning presentations on the diagnosis, management and treatment of COPD, tobacco cessation, pulmonary function testing and Medicare’s coverage of oxygen systems.

For more information on the conference and symposium, please contact Laurie Cole, program assistant at the ALA of New York, at (315) 593-2488 or lcole@alany.org.

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.

Have you or one of your loved ones experienced the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and

the dizzying array of monitors and equipment? The ICU can be a daunting environment even for the strong of heart. There is a website available to assist patients and family in learning about the ICU environment. Two physicians developed an informational and educational website known as ICU-USA, Inc.

Robert Taylor, MD and Thomas Ahrens, MD co-founded the website in 1999. The mission of the site, according to the website is to “improve communication and understanding in the emotionally-charged environment of critical care.” The website assists visitors “by explaining ICU-related medical conditions, drugs, procedures, equipment and supplies - virtually all aspects of the ICU environment.”

As the founders saw it, “Physicians and nurses spend inadequate time communicating with patients and their families. Unanswered questions lead to a lack of understanding about the patient’s condition and treatments. The results are reduced patient and family satisfaction with medical care and, often, increased costs.” Their solution was to provide a means to improve communication between clinicians, patients, and families and thus the ICU-USA website (www.icu-usa.com) was born.

The website’s best area for patients is from the homepage, the link titled Table of Contents. Here there are a variety of questions that are answered in layperson terms. Topics include What Will Happen, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, Questions to Always Ask, ICU Medical Information and much more. There is a link titled *Tour an ICU Room*, which provides a picture of an ICU room and explains the various pieces of equipment.

Another helpful link on this site is the Related Links. This link displays related links that are grouped into categories such as Legal Issues, Medical Conditions, Medical Procedures, Laboratory Tests and X-rays and Scans. These help to navigate to sites that will explain the various topics.

For more information, you can visit the website at www.icu-usa.com.

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You are invited!

Please join us for the
Annual NHOPA General Membership Meeting
Via Conference Call

Date: Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Time: 11 am EST (10 CST, 9 MST, 8 PST)

Toll-Free Phone Number: Provided when registered

Get a first hand update on the issues in which NHOPA is involved, to discuss issues that concern our members, and to learn about the 2008 election results

To participate in the conference call, pre-register at one of the following;

Phone: 800.NHOPA.44 (800-6467-244)

Email: ExecOffice@homeoxygen.org

Mail: NHOPA, 8618 Westwood Center Dr., Suite 210, Vienna, VA 22182

Participants wishing to have topics placed on the agenda should provide the NHOPA Executive Office with a written outline of the topic(s) no later than Tuesday, November 4, 2008. Once the agenda and plans for the call are finalized you will be provided with the toll free phone number and required access code.

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