Home Oxygen

Since 2012 home oxygen in London has been supplied by Air Liquide, with the cost for oxygen across London being approximately £10 million annually. Locally in Tower Hamlets there are approximately 410 home oxygen users, at an annual cost of £450,000. Newly appointed in April, a Home Oxygen Specialist has been in post developing a database of patients on home oxygen therapy and carrying out reviews of home oxygen usage for adult respiratory and non-respiratory patients across Tower Hamlets. Many of these patients are prescribed long term oxygen therapy (LTOT), which is often supplied by a concentrator at home as well as ambulatory equipment such as cylinders. Studies have shown that about 50% of patients on oxygen concentrators are housebound and therefore this new post will primarily be reviewing patients at home.

It is acknowledged that compliance with oxygen prescription, both under and over use is a common occurrence. The importance of involving patients who require oxygen in the choice of their ambulatory modality may help to improve compliance. A survey of 219 patients on LTOT, performed with the British Lung foundation revealed 54% felt that visits to family and friends were restricted with home oxygen and 44% were prevented from shopping. 73% considered that availability of small lightweight cylinders would enable them to take more exercise.

Guidelines suggest that all patients on LTOT should be visited at home within 4 weeks of LTOT prescription by a specialist experienced in the provision of home oxygen. This will ensure that they have the best equipment to meet their need and where it is no longer needed, it is removed. In addition following a recent house fire in Chiswick that involved oxygen, a focus on smoking and the additional fire risks in this patient group have raised awareness of the importance of assessing patients at home.

If you have any patients on home oxygen, you wish to discuss please contact Claire Davey, Home Oxygen Specialist, based in ARCaRe (Adult Respiratory Care and Rehabilitation Team), Barts Health NHS Trust, Mile End hospital.
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