Position Statement

Respiratory Therapy Protocols

Respiratory therapy protocols are used to initiate or modify a patient care plan following a pre-determined and structured set of physician orders. They include instructions or interventions in which the respiratory therapist is allowed to initiate, discontinue, refine, transition, or restart therapy as the patient's medical condition dictates. Protocols are generally written in algorithmic form, are based on scientific evidence, and include guidelines and options at decision points along with clearly stated outcome objectives.

Current medical literature supports the use of respiratory therapy protocols as an effective tool for producing improved patient outcomes and appropriate allocation of services. Based on their demonstrated efficacy, it is the position of the American Association for Respiratory Care that institution-approved protocols should be used by respiratory therapists as the standard of care for providing respiratory therapy services under qualified medical direction.

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