

Date:	April 15, 2020
To:	All Medical Staff and Northern Health Clinical Leadership
From:	Penny Anguish, NI COO and Northern Health EOC Operational Lead Lisette Vienneau, Regional Director, Diagnostic Services Dr. Sharla Rae Olsen, Respiriologist / Internal Medicine
CC	Angela De Smit, NE COO; Ciro Panessa, NW COO, Ronald Chapman, VP Medicine; Northern Health Medical Directors, NH EOC
Re:	COVID-19 Response - Temporary Suspension of Overnight Oximetry Testing for Inpatients

As part of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak response, overnight oximetry testing will be temporarily suspended for hospital inpatients where this is provided in the Northern Health region.

RATIONALE:

- Diagnosis, treatment and titration of sleep-disordered breathing is a time intensive process and involves an interprofessional approach. Given the additional resources required to manage individuals with acute respiratory illness during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is prudent to suspend this diagnostic service in order to reduce these patient encounters and protect the time and resources of the involved staff and physicians.
- Providing Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) therapy to inpatients identified by overnight oximetry as candidates for treatment creates a greater risk of transmission of the virus since it is an aerosol generating medical procedure.
- Private companies who provide the PAP devices used to treat sleep disordered breathing have ceased patient encounters in the community; therefore, patients who need PAP therapy equipment cannot be setup or have the therapy titrated safely and appropriately in their homes. This creates an extra layer of complexity in trying to discharge patients in a safe and timely manner which is not ideal when hospital resources are being conserved in response to the CoVID-19 pandemic.
- Provision of nocturnal home oxygen ties directly into the testing and treatment of sleep disordered breathing. Due to province wide changes in the home oxygen program criteria due to COVID-19, oxygen therapy for nocturnal use is not currently available. Again, this extra-hospital factor creates a barrier to timely discharge.

In extreme circumstances, exceptions to the overnight oximetry testing restrictions may occur on a case-by-case basis. Exemptions will require specialist consult before testing is approved.

For questions or assistance contact Dr. Sharla Rae Olsen through the Home Oxygen Program Office 250-649-4814 or Lisette Vienneau by email Lisette.Vienneau@northernhealth.ca