

Position Statements on Practice

Administering Influenza Vaccinations

October 12, 2011

Section 4761.01 of the Revised Code establishes the scope of practice for respiratory care providers in the State of Ohio. Under this scope, therapist may “administer medications for the testing and treatment of cardiopulmonary impairments.” Based upon the medical expertise of the Scope of Practice Committee and readily available literature, the Board has determined that administering influenza vaccinations is within the scope of respiratory care practice.

Influenza viruses generally enter the body through the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs), attaching to the tissues of the lungs and respiratory tract. Influenza virus is toxic to the respiratory tract cells, causing an immune system response. The influx of white blood cells and rapid rise of cytokines can result in damage to the lung tissue. This activity results in the traditional symptoms that are normally observed: fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, and coughing. If untreated, the infection can lead to pneumonia, the main cause of influenza death. Secondary bacterial infections are also a leading cause of severe illness and death related to influenza infection. Based upon this generally understood chain of events relating to influenza infection, the Scope of Practice concludes that vaccination, although preventative in focus, is a treatment. Section 4761.01 (A) (4) of the Revised Code authorizes respiratory care professional to administer medications “for the testing or treatment of cardiopulmonary impairment.”

Under the Ohio Revised Code, the Scope of Practice believes a properly licensed and trained respiratory therapist could effectively administer influenza vaccinations. Additionally, the Scope of Practice Committee supports the inter-disciplinary use of qualified health care professionals to address the widespread needs of the citizens of Ohio.