Oxygen…The most important drug you are taking!

By: John R. Goodman, BS, RRT

Oxygen was first discovered by an eccentric English scientist named Joseph Priestly way back in 1774. It was first used in the actual treatment of patients by an English physician named Thomas Beddoes in 1798, primarily to treat asthma and pneumonia. Although some of the medical applications of oxygen were quickly discovered, it would be many years before the technology of oxygen production and delivery could be satisfactorily worked out. In fact, it wasn’t until the invention and discovery of plastics that oxygen could be comfortably and safely delivered to patients requiring oxygen on a more than intermittent basis.

The first true investigations to study the effects of long-term oxygen therapy (LTOT) were done in the 1970’s by Dr. Thomas L. Petty and colleagues. These early studies done in both the United States and Great Britain, proved beyond any doubt that survival (how long you lived) was directly related to how continuously patients were able to wear their oxygen. In other words, how compliant they were with their oxygen therapy. These landmark studies concluded that LTOT helped to reduce the workload of the heart, improved exercise tolerance, as well as neuropsychological status. It also showed that the average patient was only willing or able to wear their nasal cannula 17.7 hours per day rather than the 24 hours per day as prescribed by their physician. This is a key finding when you remember that survival was directly related to how many hours per day the patient would actually wear their oxygen. Oxygen is probably the only “drug” of which can be said, “If a little is good, more is better.”

Why is it so important to wear your oxygen as continuously as possible? Well, without oxygen the body is unable to produce and store energy. Oxygen is required by every single cell in the body (over 1 trillion) to function optimally. Oxygen must be delivered to all body cells every minute, of every hour, of every day, 365 days per year. In this way the body is able to utilize the nutrients in the foods we eat to combine with the oxygen we breathe to produce and then store energy. This is how we have the energy to simply “get through the day.”

Remember that oxygen is the only drug ever scientifically proven to increase your life span. Why isn’t oxygen then treated like the drug it is - much like an antibiotic or perhaps a steroid? The answer may simply be this. When we talk of oxygen, we always talk of putting a patient “on” oxygen. In reality it is more correct to think of oxygen as a drug we put “in” a patient!

LTOT patients report many problems associated with the wearing of a nasal cannula. These have been well documented and include sores under the nose or over the ears, nosebleeds, runny or congested nose, sore throat or hoarseness, accidental dislodgement especially while asleep, and embarrassment while wearing their nasal cannula in public.
Although the standard plastic nasal cannula has been around since 1956, there haven’t been many advances in either its design or features. Most patients will tell you it is pretty difficult to wear their nasal cannula every minute of every day due to either the discomfort factors or the cosmetic objections. Many patients also report anxiety due to shortness of breath when their nasal cannula accidentally falls off at night.

What if you don’t like to wear your nasal cannula in public? What are your options? Well, you can decide to just stay in the house; which certainly doesn’t promote quality of life. You could use an alternative oxygen delivery device, such as the:

- **Oxy-Mizer®**
- **Oxy-Pendant®**
- **Oxy-Arm®**

While certainly effective, these products are nonetheless obtrusive and most patients will not wear them in public. You may even consider something more invasive and adventurous such as transtracheal oxygen. While transtracheal oxygen is the most efficient form of oxygen therapy available, the vast majority of patients may not be psychologically ready for the transtracheal option (for more information about **SCOOP®** transtracheal oxygen therapy, please visit [www.tto2.com](http://www.tto2.com)). One of the most liberating alternatives to standard nasal oxygen delivery is Oxy-View Oxygen Therapy Eyewear. Oxy-View eyewear provides a genuinely new alternative in oxygen delivery that helps eliminate many of the problems associated with wearing a standard nasal cannula.
Oxy-View eyewear was designed to make the delivery of oxygen more discreet, easy to use, far more comfortable, and in some patients perhaps more efficient. Oxy-View eyewear is available in several different sizes, styles, and colors. It allows the delivery of up to 5 liters per minute of continuous flow oxygen, is compatible with all oxygen sources, and will work with most of oxygen conserving devices available today.

For patients who wear glasses, including those requiring bifocal or trifocal prescriptions, Oxy-View eyeglasses gets the extra weight of the cannula and tubing off your face and ears. The “J” hooks that deliver the oxygen are designed to line up with the anatomy of the nose, to insure both a good fit, and efficient delivery of oxygen. At body temperature they warm up a bit, making them even more comfortable, and therefore more likely to be used for longer periods of time.

In real life situations, and from more than a few feet away, it is very difficult to even notice the prongs or the connecting tubing associated with them. For this reason, many patients who may have been reluctant to go out in public wearing a standard nasal cannula, might now venture forth into public areas such as stores, shopping malls, church, family visits etc. Improved compliance with oxygen therapy contributes to both improved quality and quantity of life for LTOT patients. After all is said and done, isn’t this the bottom line for all patients?
In summary, Oxy-View eyewear helps you to dramatically reduce the discomfort associated with standard nasal cannula, while at the same time greatly improving self-image and compliance with your doctor’s oxygen prescription. Wearing oxygen as continuously as possible using Oxy-View eyewear, can lead to a longer, healthier, and happier life for all oxygen dependent patients.

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