Practice Prescribing

General practitioners to prescribe oxygen concentrators

M HAMID HUSSAIN

From 1 December 1985 general practitioners can prescribe oxygen concentrators for patients who need them in normal practice. Many oxygen concentrators are electronically driven machines which separate a high proportion of oxygen and other components of air at such a rate that the composition of the delivered air is consistent over a wide range of operating conditions. One advantage of using oxygen concentrators is that several units can be placed in parallel, so that the oxygen concentration delivered is not reduced. Oxygen concentrators are expensive and are not effective unless used for long-term oxygen therapy. The Department of Health and Social Services has therefore decided to allow medical practitioners to prescribe oxygen concentrators. We present an example to show how the electronic operation of a oxygen concentrator is achieved.

Use and cost

It has been estimated that roughly 50000 patients in the United Kingdom need oxygen concentrators. For example, 20% of elderly people in hospital are likely to need oxygen concentrators. The ability of oxygen concentrators to separate oxygen from air reduces the need for long-term oxygen therapy by 30%. The cost of providing long-term oxygen therapy is about £20000 per year for an elderly patient. The cost of providing the concentrator is about £3000 per year. However, the concentrator can be used by several patients, so that the cost per patient is reduced. For example, if the concentrator is used by 10 patients, the cost per patient is reduced to £300.

Suitable patients

Patients who are likely to benefit from long-term oxygen treatment are those with obstructive pulmonary disease and those with chronic bronchitis. In the latter situation, the oxygen concentration must be maintained at about 30% to 40% of the atmospheric pressure. The use of oxygen concentrators has been shown to be effective in reducing the need for long-term oxygen therapy.

Summary conclusion

The use of oxygen concentrators in general practice is likely to reduce the cost of providing long-term oxygen therapy. The concentrators are expensive but may be used by several patients, so that the cost per patient is reduced.

Practice Research

Information systems for general practitioners for quality assessment: II Information preferences of the doctors

ROBIN C FRASER, JULIE T GOSLING

Abstract

In the first of a series of studies we investigated the information needs of general practitioners and how these might be met by information systems for quality assessment. The information needs of general practitioners were investigated by means of a national survey of general practitioners. The results of this survey were used to develop a questionnaire for a more detailed study of the information needs of general practitioners. The questionnaire was pilot tested and the results were used to design a questionnaire for the main study. The main study was a national survey of general practitioners. The results of the main study were used to develop a set of information preferences for general practitioners. The information preferences were used to design an information system for quality assessment.

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to identify the information needs of general practitioners and to develop an information system for quality assessment. The study was based on a national survey of general practitioners. The survey was designed to identify the information needs of general practitioners. The results of the survey were used to develop a questionnaire for a more detailed study of the information needs of general practitioners. The questionnaire was pilot tested and the results were used to design a questionnaire for the main study. The main study was a national survey of general practitioners. The results of the main study were used to develop a set of information preferences for general practitioners. The information preferences were used to design an information system for quality assessment.

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