

NHS Cambridgeshire purchases crucial equipment from Axis-Shield UK to improve respiratory care

Respiratory disease is the second biggest killer in the UK and one in every seven people in the country is affected by it– equating to approximately eight million people⁽¹⁾. Lung disease is also the second most common reason for emergency hospital admissions, with an estimated one million unplanned admissions a year in the UK⁽¹⁾.

Oxygen is vital for life and for some patients their illness prevents them from getting enough to live without becoming short of breath. Breathlessness can be an extremely distressing symptom, which many patients with respiratory disease experience. A shortage of oxygen in the blood can be fatal.

Having pulse oximeters available in practices and on home visits can help GPs and practice nurses to assess whether a patient needs to be admitted to hospital or could be looked after safely at home. They give healthcare professionals the ability to detect changes in a patient's oxygen saturation, enabling them to identify problems before the patient is put at risk.

Pulse oximeters give an idea of a patient's cardio-respiratory status by measuring the arterial oxygen saturation of haemoglobin. They use non-invasive selected wavelengths of light to determine this, with no need to actually take a sample of blood.

HuntsComm, a practice based commissioning board based in Huntingdonshire, wanted to reduce emergency hospital admissions and provide a higher quality of domiciliary patient care for people suffering with respiratory conditions. As a result of a successful business case submitted to NHS Cambridgeshire (formally Cambridgeshire PCT) they were able to purchase 133 pulse oximeters, from Axis-Shield UK, to help them to achieve this goal.

Dr Paula Newton, GP at Papworth Surgery, said: "As a member of the HuntsComm Board and a local GP I was delighted that we were successful in this business case. Low oxygen levels in the blood can be fatal and is difficult to detect on clinical examination alone. Using a pulse oximeter can help clinicians to decide whether an emergency admission and oxygen treatment is needed. Recently I used a pulse oximeter in a rare situation where a patient with a wasp sting on their tongue was in respiratory difficulty and needed urgent treatment. The oximeter helped us all to stay calm as we were confident the oxygen levels were staying at a safe level whilst we were resuscitating the patient and waiting for the ambulance."



Continuing she said: “An average admission with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) costs the NHS £3,000 and there is a higher risk of morbidity and mortality when patients are inpatients compared to being cared for in a community setting. In patients with chronic respiratory conditions, such as COPD, the monitoring of these conditions is made much simpler and more accurate by regular use of pulse oximetry. The provision of these devices has enabled practices to place one in every consulting room and they can also be easily transported to patients’ homes when visits are required. We can now use them routinely in our consultations on a daily basis and have received considerable positive feedback from practices using them.”

For further information about Axis-Shield UK products please visit www.axis-shielduk.com

Footnote:

⁽¹⁾ British Lung Foundation (BLF): <http://www.lunguk.org/media-and-campaigning/media-centre/lung-stats-and-facts/factsaboutrespiratorydisease.htm>

