The European Spirometry Driving Licence Task Force

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None declared.

In recent years, many European countries have shown a growing interest in regulating the quality of spirometry education. The American Thoracic Society/European Respiratory Society (ERS) Task Force on Standardisation of Lung Function Testing [1] recommends a standard training similar to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health-approved spirometry programme in the USA, which includes the fundamentals of spirometry standards and hands-on training. Competency is demonstrated by passing a written and practical examination in the presence of an experienced instructor.

Spirometry refresher training is also recommended. Refresher training helps to ensure that spirometry practitioners are informed of changes in spirometry standards and learn new skills. It also provides a mechanism for spirometry practitioners to obtain answers to questions not foreseen during initial training. The need for refresher training has been recognised by several organisations.

A proposal was submitted to the ERS School to set up of a Task Force to formulate a spirometry certification programme, with a view to harmonising education and training in spirometry, providing an internationally recognised qualification, raising spirometry skill levels throughout Europe to ensure that patients are investigated appropriately, facilitating re-training and re-certification, and providing a platform from which to move to higher-level education in respiratory physiology.

The proposal was supported by the School, and initially a general questionnaire was circulated to various members across Europe to assess what training was currently available, who was carrying out spirometry testing, and what was desirable for the future. The results of this survey were assessed by the ERS School.

The first formal meeting of the Task Force members took place during the ERS Congress in Berlin (Saturday October 4, 2008), and 14 countries were represented (The Netherlands, Poland, Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Slovenia and the UK).

During this meeting, we found out that spirometry training is patchy across Europe, and is not mandatory anywhere. Spirometry is delivered by a variety of practitioners – physiologists, technologists, technicians, nurses, general practitioners and physicians. There is little formal funding for training. Most courses that do exist are 1–2 days only, and there was general agreement that a formal education of healthcare staff who measure spirometry is needed, particularly as research is often based only on spirometry results!

The next step for the Task Force is to circulate a comprehensive questionnaire to professional bodies and to national associations, and to gather data relevant to development of a standardised training programme. This allows large numbers of participants to be surveyed and therefore allows many potential stakeholders to participate. This survey will take place early in 2009, with a second meeting of Task Force members planned for March. In the light of the results of this questionnaire, a second survey of participants will take place during the summer. A third meeting of the Task Force will take place at the ERS Congress in Vienna, to decide upon the items that should be included in the final document. Following this decision, the final document will be submitted to the School for approval before being published in *Breathe*.

Reference

1. Miller MR, Crapo R, Hankinson J, *et al*. General considerations for lung function testing. *Eur Respir J* 2005; 26: 153–161.