CMS Payment Must Reflect the Unique Role of Supplemental Liquid Oxygen

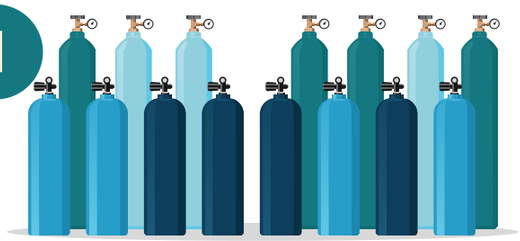
Millions of Americans who need help breathing require supplemental oxygen therapy. While the majority of this patient population can rely upon gaseous oxygen or portable oxygen concentrators, a small but substantial number of Americans require liquid oxygen, which offers a continuous, high-liter flow of oxygen.

Recognizing the unique role liquid oxygen plays in the health of a subset of individuals who rely upon supplemental oxygen—as well as the unique challenges associated with manufacturing, freezing, transporting, and utilizing liquid oxygen safely—adequate reimbursement is critical.

LIQUID OXYGEN: The Journey from Plant to Patient

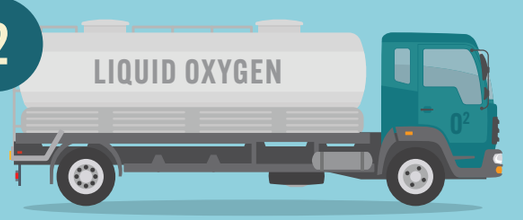
Liquid oxygen suppliers must maintain a highly complex infrastructure to provide a small number of patients with the care they need.

1



Liquid oxygen is developed in chemical plants, where it must be super-chilled to -230 degrees through a highly energy-intensive process in order to prevent it from leaking from its tanks. Suppliers who store liquid oxygen must be specially certified, registered with the FDA, and subject to inspection in order to ensure safety. In some areas, certain fire codes may need to be met. All of this generates additional overhead costs.

2



Once liquid oxygen is manufactured and packaged in metal canisters, specially trained and licensed HAZMAT drivers must pick it up using special trucks. Because there are comparatively fewer liquid oxygen patients than gaseous oxygen patients, truck drivers often must drive hundreds of miles in a single day to service all patients in a given region. This is especially burdensome in America's rural and underserved areas.

3

When a truck arrives at a patient's home, the technician typically pumps between 60 and 150 pounds of liquid oxygen into a special reservoir stored inside the patient's home.

4

Due to growing costs, suppliers have found it increasingly difficult to provide liquid oxygen. The COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, and accelerating inflation make this challenge even harder. **Despite a stark difference in cost and complexity, CMS reimburses liquid and gaseous oxygen at nearly the same rate.**

Medicare: Protect patient access to liquid oxygen – and adjust reimbursement accordingly.

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