College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario

Ordre des thérapeutes respiratoires de l'Ontario

ALLERGY TESTING

Practice FAQs   **June 2014**

QUESTION

As an RT, why can I do a methacholine challenge test but not an allergy skin prick test or an oral allergen challenge?

ANSWER

Respiratory Therapists (RTs) are not currently authorized to perform procedures under the 13th controlled act in the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*: "*Allergy challenge testing of a kind in which a positive result of the test is a significant allergic response*" (e.g., allergy skin prick testing). However, RTs routinely perform methacholine challenges under the authority of the fifth controlled act (authorized act #4 in the *Respiratory Therapy Act*) "*administering a substance by injection or inhalation*". The rationale for RTs being authorized to do one type of allergy test but not the other has to do with the RT's scope of practice and the nature of the "…*significant allergic response*".

As with any treatment or test undertaken, RTs must not only be competent to perform the procedure but also safely manage any potential complications. The possible significant response to a methacholine challenge is usually bronchoconstriction, which RTs are trained to handle (even at entry-to-practice level). Other tests, like an allergy skin prick test and intradermal test, can produce a more generalized, systemic response (e.g., hives, facial swelling) that require additional skills in order to effectively manage the patient.

That's where delegation comes in. It not only allows for the transfer of authority but also the transfer of competencies (knowledge, skill and judgment) to ensure that any possible complications can be handled safely. It is important to note that RTs can receive delegation to engage in activities under the 13th controlled act (e.g., skin prick or intradermal tests). Refer to the Professional Practice Guideline on *Delegation* for further information. If you have any additional questions about specific allergy tests, please contact Carole Hamp, RRT – Manager, Quality Practice at hamp@crto.on.ca.