

**POSITION STATEMENT  
TENNESSEE BOARD OF RESPIRATORY CARE**

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**ADMINISTRATION OF INFLUENZA AND PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINES**

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Pursuant to TENN CODE ANN. § 63-27-102(4)(A)(i), the practice of respiratory care means, under the supervision, control, and responsibility of a licensed physician, the performance of cardiorespiratory research, cardiorespiratory health promotion and disease prevention, and community wellness and education programs. TENN CODE ANN. §63-27-102(4)(A)(i)(a) defines a Respiratory Therapist' scope of practice to include the "administration of pharmacologic agents and medical gasses necessary to diagnose, implement treatment, promote disease prevention, and provide rehabilitation to the cardiorespiratory system." It is the position of the Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care that a respiratory therapist, under the supervision of a licensed physician, can administer disease prevention agents such as the influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations.

Influenza viruses generally enter body's system through and attach to tissues in the respiratory tract. The virus is harmful and dangerous to the respiratory tract cells, causing an immune system response. If untreated, this infection can lead to pneumonia, the main cause of influenza-related death. Secondary bacterial infections can also cause severe illnesses. Administration of the influenza vaccine by respiratory therapists is considered by the Board of Respiratory Care to be disease prevention.

Pneumococcal disease is caused by an infection in the lungs by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. This bacterium normally resides in the sinuses and respiratory tract of healthy individuals, but it can spread to and colonize the lungs of persons with compromised or weaker immune systems. Infections by this bacterium are the most common cause of community-acquired pneumonia and meningitis among young children and the elderly. Administration of the pneumococcal vaccine by respiratory therapists is considered by the Board of Respiratory Care to be disease prevention.

The Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care believes that the scope of practice of a respiratory therapist licensed in Tennessee includes the administration of influenza and pneumococcal vaccines. A therapist must be properly trained to administer these vaccinations and do so under the supervision, control, and responsibility of a licensed physician. The Board of Respiratory Care believes that this position statement will help address the extensive needs of the citizens of Tennessee to receive vaccinations and help prevent the seasonal spread of the flu virus and its associated bacterial infections.

**ADOPTED BY A QUORUM OF THE TENNESSEE RESPIRATORY CARE BOARD ON  
THIS 14<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MAY, 2020**



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Chair, Tennessee Board of Respiratory Care