

Respiratory Therapists in the Medical Esthetics Industry

Respiratory Therapists (RTs) in Ontario work across a variety of settings, including medical esthetics. It is important to note that RTs must abide by all legislative and regulatory requirements regardless of practice setting.

Generally, an RT cannot perform a controlled act unless authorized by a physician or other prescriber. In a medical spa setting, an RT is authorized to perform the controlled acts of “administering a substance by injection” and “performing a basic prescribed procedure below the dermis”. However, RTs do not have the authorization for the substance (e.g. Botox, fillers, plasma etc.) as these products fall outside of the scope of Respiratory Therapy. Therefore, if RTs wish to work in this area, they require formal, written delegation from an appropriate prescriber to perform these acts.

RT’s must undergo thorough education, training and receive appropriate supervision and collaboration from an experienced prescriber to safely work in this environment. It is important that the RTs understand the risks and complications that can result and have the education and tools to manage adverse reactions. The medical supervisor must be readily available always to assist as required.

Medical spas offer a variety of services, including those that would fall under the controlled act “administering a form of energy”. RTs are permitted to perform only diagnostic ultrasound under this controlled act and would therefore require formal delegation (and a valid order) to perform services such as body sculpting, laser or soundwave treatment.

RTs are not permitted to perform treatment based on their assessment of symptoms as this is defined as “diagnosing”, which is a controlled act not authorized to the profession. It is also a requirement that RTs identify themselves by name and professional title, avoiding terms such as “advanced medical injector” to obtain valid consent from their clients. RTs must also be aware of transparent business practices, including false advertising, conflict of interest, and record-keeping expectations.

Documentation standards remain the same, regardless of the practice setting. All patient/client interactions and consent must be documented in a permanent fashion. Finally, RTs must ensure they hold valid and sufficient personal liability insurance.
