



**British Thoracic Society  
Emergency Oxygen Audit 2013  
(National Audit Period 15 August – 1 November 2013)**

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The British Thoracic Society (BTS) Guideline for Emergency Oxygen Use in Adult Patients (1), the first national (or international) guideline on this topic, aimed at simplifying oxygen delivery and enhancing the management of acutely ill patients, was published in October 2008.

The Guideline was prepared by a multidisciplinary working group and published with the endorsement of 22 professional institutions, across emergency medicine, intensive care, physiotherapy, primary care, anaesthetics and the ambulance service. The Guideline is being updated and be published in late 2014/early 2015.

The Guideline's key recommendations include:

- Oxygen therapy should be adjusted to achieve target saturations rather than giving a fixed dose to all patients with the same disease.
- Oxygen will require a prescription in all situations except for the immediate management of critical illness.

The sixth audit of emergency oxygen use in UK hospitals took place in August – November 2013.

The numbers audited each year and the percent on oxygen therapy is shown in Table 1.

A summary of the main elements of the audits over the past 6 years is given in Table 1.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Hospitals</b>	99	47	90	156	145	<b>151</b>
<b>Wards</b>	712	300	1,026	1919	1733	<b>2074</b>
<b>Patients</b>	14,830	7,113	22,017	41,009	38,094	<b>45,032</b>
<b>Percent on oxygen</b>	17.5%	18.4%	15.5%	13.7%	14.0%	<b>13.8%</b>

In 2008, 32% of patients who were using oxygen had some sort of written order for oxygen use. In 2013, this figure had risen to 55% of patients.

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Percent on oxygen</b>	17.5%	18.4%	15.5%	13.7%	14%	<b>13.8%</b>
<b>Target range</b>	10%	40%	41%	43%	46%	<b>52%</b>
<b>No written order</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Percentage of all hospital patients on oxygen with no written order</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>

The national audits from 2008 to 2013 have shown that oxygen prescribing has improved since the publication of the BTS Emergency Oxygen Guideline in October 2008 but many patients were still being given oxygen with no prescription in late 2013, and there is some evidence that clinical staff may not always respond appropriately to patients with high or low oxygen saturation levels.

The next National Emergency Oxygen Audit will be in August - November 2015 and further details are available on the BTS audit system at:

<https://audits.brit-thoracic.org.uk/>

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