



# “Oxygen... you can't live without it”: Perceptions of rural people using domiciliary oxygen



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**Background:** Oxygen is prescribed for patients with respiratory illness to ensure adequate oxygenation to tissues and vital organs. Previous studies with urban patients addressing the ‘lived’ experience of domiciliary oxygen have shown they experienced social and physical isolation.

**Aims:** This qualitative study described rural patients’ perception of how oxygen therapy has impacted upon their life.

**Method:** Data were obtained from semi structured interviews (n = 5) which were transcribed and coded to identify themes using phenomenological processes.

**Results:** Three broad themes were identified.

- *Oxygen as an enabling paradox.* Participants acknowledged that concentrated oxygen enabled them to do more, but was inconvenient. Those who had access to portable oxygen reported less restriction.
- *Oxygen as an inevitable necessity.* Participants acknowledged that oxygen was an inevitable part of their disease process.
- *Life modifications to accommodate the theft of independence.* Participants articulated grief for the loss of their former self and strategies employed to accommodate their decline in health.

**Conclusions:** Social and geographical isolation identified in previous studies were not replicated in this rural study. Access to oxygen enabled participants to live, but access to affordable portable oxygen enabled the freedom of community participation within the individuals’ health limitations.

*For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on ‘view completed projects’*

Tod Adams is employed as a Clinical Nurse Consultant and works in adult chronic respiratory medicine at Shoalhaven Memorial Hospital on the NSW south coast. She has recently been authorised by the Nurses and Midwives Board of NSW as a Nurse Practitioner. She holds a Masters in Nursing, and graduate certificates in aged care, coronary care and health management. She lives in the bush with her husband and two children and has an extensive bottle top collection.



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