

Clinical Insights

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Neck Breather Medical Awareness Skin Decal

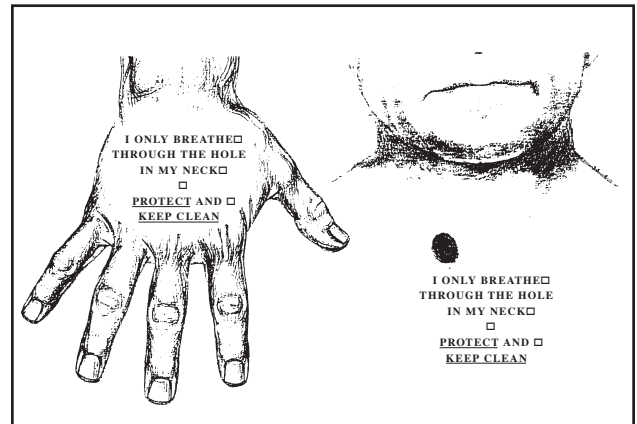
For many years laryngectomees have experienced legitimate fears regarding care and protection of their tracheostoma when **temporarily hospitalized** or in other settings where medical personnel may be unfamiliar with a “total neck breather.” Some tragedies and many near tragedies have occurred in such situations throughout the world. In addition, users of tracheoesophageal voice prostheses have worried about inadvertent prosthesis removal and subsequent closure of the tracheoesophageal “puncture.”

The Neck Breather Medical Awareness Skin Decal (patent pending) is a unique warning system designed and developed by Eric D. Blom, Ph.D. and Mary Jane Renner, M.S.W. This temporary, non-toxic, non-irritating water transfer “tattoo” is applied directly to the surface of the skin adjacent the tracheostoma and/or on the front surface of the hand, both highly noticeable and visible areas. It temporarily replaces the shirt pocket-warning card or MedicAlert® (MedicAlert Foundation, Turlock, CA) identification jewelry or similar product commonly worn by laryngectomees. These items

are usually taken from the person upon admission to a hospital. Reference on the new skin decal to the stoma being a “hole in the neck” was purposely selected to avoid unfamiliar terminology. The skin decal is usually durable for approximately one week and can easily be removed with rubbing alcohol.

The Head and Neck Cancer Rehabilitation Institute (a 501C3 Public Charity) is distributing the “**Neck Breather Medical Awareness Skin Decal.**” A booklet of four decals is **available free of charge** by contacting the Head and Neck Cancer Rehabilitation Institute. Initial funding for the decal program was contributed by Ann M. Fink in memory and honor of her husband, Richard Fink. Optional donations, large or small, to help continue this program will be appreciated. Individuals interested in receiving a booklet of Neck Breather Medical Awareness Skin Decals should

contact the **Head and Neck Cancer Rehabilitation Institute**, 7440 North Shadeland Avenue, Suite 107, Indianapolis, Indiana. Toll Free (USA Only) 1-800-305-0117, E-mail: mjrhnsa@aol.com



The lay term “hole in the neck” versus “stoma” has purposely been used on the Decal to avoid any misunderstanding.

A New Source for Help

The Service

“You have cancer.” These words can be devastating to patients and family members. Add a recommendation for treatment that can alter a person’s physical appearance, speech, swallowing, respiration, and quality of life and a myriad of questions come to mind. This is the situation in which many patients diagnosed with head and neck cancer and their families find themselves. Probably the greatest fear is the fear of the unknown.

Many organizations have printed materials, web sites, and newsletters. However, the opportunity to speak directly with a cancer survivor or someone experienced in working with head and neck cancer patients is frequently not readily available. **The Information Hotline for Laryngectomee/Head and Neck Cancer Patients** offers a unique opportunity for patients and families to talk with Mary Jane Renner, a cancer survivor who has years of professional counseling experience with head and neck cancer patients and families.

The Telephone Counselor

Mary Jane Renner, M.S.W. holds a Masters Degree from the Tulane University School of Social Work. She underwent a total laryngectomy twenty years

ago. Mary Jane returned to a social work career following her rehabilitation and also became involved in volunteer work with laryngectomees through a local support group and the International Association of Laryngectomees. For the past nine years she has been on the staff of Head and Neck Surgery Associates in Indianapolis, Indiana as a patient and family counselor. This has brought her into daily contact with many patients who have undergone major surgery for head and neck cancer. She is experienced in individual, group and family counseling. Mary Jane served on the staff of the annual International Association of Laryngectomees Voice Institute for fifteen years, and is a past President of the International Association of Laryngectomees. She has published and lectured extensively on laryngectomee rehabilitation and psychosocial impact of cancer and cancer survivorship. She is also an active volunteer with the American Cancer Society, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and The Wellness Community of Central Indiana. **The Information/Hotline** will not give medical advice. Ms. Renner will provide encouragement, support, general information and resources.

The toll free line, **1-800-305-0117**, is available Monday through Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm Eastern Time. When Ms. Renner is not available, the call

will transfer to voice mail and be returned on the following business day.

The Sponsor

The Head and Neck Cancer Rehabilitation Institute is a non-profit 501C3 public charity founded in 1983 by Ronald C. Hamaker, M.D. and Eric Blom, Ph.D. The primary focus of the Institute is head and neck cancer public education, rehabilitation and research. Initial support for the **Information/Hotline** was contributed by Margaret Miray Tse and family in memory and honor of Stephan Yn Tse. The Head and Neck Cancer Rehabilitation Institute is located at 7440 N. Shadeland Avenue, Suite 107, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250. The Institute can be contacted via the toll free line or mjrhnsa@aol.com.

MOVING? Changing Your Address, Phone or Fax? Let us know so you will continue to receive “Clinical Insights: Newsletter. Fax: 317-579-0476 or Phone: 1-800-283-1056, or write Eric D. Blom, Ph.D. at International Center for Post-Laryngectomy Voice Restoration, 7440 North Shadeland, Suite 107, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46250.