

Improvements in respiratory protection for Healthcare workers (project BREATHE)

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Healthcare workers routinely use respirators to protect against exposures to airborne pathogens. However, research has shown that these devices are not well accepted in the healthcare community. During a public health emergency, such as a pandemic, individuals are unlikely to tolerate these devices for extended periods of time. To address these issues and promote increased usage of respiratory protection in the healthcare field, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) initiated and co-chaired Project BREATHE (“Better Respiratory Equipment using Advanced Technologies for Healthcare Employees”) with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). A working group of federal experts created 28 consensus recommendations detailing characteristics of an ideal respirator to be marketed to the healthcare marketplace. This project will partner private and federal resources to address the unique needs of healthcare workers. New products designed with the recommendations of the Project BREATHE working group will be created through this collaboration. During each step of this project, healthcare worker feedback will be gathered to assure that end-user needs are met.