



The Debate on Hemoptysis Guidelines

TO THE EDITOR:

In Dr. Jennifer Wilson's article on hemoptysis (*The Canadian Journal of CME*, March 2004), the guidelines are based on the amount of blood being < 5mL; 75mL; 7,100 mL/24hr. Considering people typically overestimate the amount of blood, is there an approach to getting a more reliable estimate from a patient? [CME](#)

John E. Dawson, MD
Ottawa, Ontario

Dr. Wilson responds:

As the writer correctly points out, an accurate estimation of the amount of expectorated blood is notoriously difficult. The guidelines presented in the article for minor, moderate, and massive hemoptysis are not evidence-based. A better rule of thumb may be to consider minor hemoptysis as limited to blood streaking in the sputum. Massive hemoptysis is usually self-evident.

Furthermore, it is the patient's symptoms and respiratory stability, and less so the absolute amount of hemoptysis, which predicate the need for rapid intervention and investigation.

Jennifer Wilson, MD,
FRCPC, Active Staff,
Vancouver Hospital &
Health Sciences Centre
Internal & respiratory
Medicine
Clinical lecturer,
University of British
Columbia,
Vancouver, British
Columbia