

Respiratory Therapists in the Emergency Department Care Setting

Patients are at risk for unanticipated injury or illness requiring emergency services. This is why Emergency Departments Care settings rely on Respiratory Therapists for their expertise in a wide range of cardiopulmonary treatment modalities. The Respiratory Therapist's skills in assessment, airway management, resuscitation, patient education, pulmonary disease management, and mechanical ventilation are essential for optimizing care of the compromised patient across all patient populations.

Respiratory Therapists are educated to provide care in the diverse, dynamic and demanding environment of the Emergency Care setting. Their knowledge of cardiopulmonary anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology as well as their ability to initiate both acute and critical respiratory care interventions/techniques is supported by the Respiratory Therapist's formalized training and competency verification and established scope of practice. This enables the Respiratory Therapist to serve as a contributing member of the patient care team in the Emergency Care setting.

The skills and responsibilities demonstrated by credentialed Respiratory Therapists that can contribute to the success and efficiency of patient management in the Emergency Care setting include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Patient assessment
2. Initiation of chronic and acute care disease protocols
3. Medical gas administration
4. Bronchial hygiene therapy
5. Medication administration by inhalation, including intermittent and continuous, as well as oral medication administration if defined by established scope of practice
6. Airway assessment, intubation, stabilization, and management
7. Artificial airway care

8. Invasive and noninvasive mechanical ventilator management
9. Blood sampling (arterial, capillary, and venous), analysis and interpretation
10. Hemodynamic monitoring
11. Code, stroke, and trauma team response
12. Transport of the unstable critically ill patient
13. Bronchoscopy assist and other diagnostic procedures requiring conscious sedation
14. Cardiopulmonary procedures and triage assist
15. Patient and family education
16. Tobacco cessation education/counseling

To provide the quality of care our patients deserve while reducing the risk of liability in health care institutions, the AARC recommends the use of qualified Respiratory Therapists trained in patient management and complex respiratory-care **therapy** modalities to provide safe and effective treatment for the highest risk patients with cardiopulmonary compromise in all Emergency Department **Care** settings.

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