

## Respiratory Therapist Education

Respiratory therapists provide direct patient care, patient education, and care coordination. **A respiratory therapist practices in various in-patient and out-patient settings (e.g. acute care facilities, long-term and sub-acute care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living centers, subacute care units, rehabilitation centers, diagnostics units, physician's offices, and in the home).**

### **A respiratory therapist's responsibilities and competencies include:**

- Their **Clinical decisions that** are increasingly data-driven **and evidenced based** by scientifically supported algorithms (protocols) to deliver respiratory care.
- Involvement They are involved in research and need to be adept at understanding the practical ramifications of published research.
- Respiratory therapists **The use of** sophisticated medical equipment and performance of complex therapeutic procedures and diagnostic studies. They also provide education to patients and other members of the public.
- Respiratory therapists must possess a **An** in-depth understanding of human physiology and **the ability to** apply that knowledge in the clinical setting **workplace**.
- **Excellent communication skills when interacting with other health care providers.**

The ~~continually~~ **continuously** expanding knowledge base of today's respiratory care field requires a ~~more~~ highly educated professional ~~than ever before~~. Factors such as increased emphasis on evidence based medicine, focus on respiratory disease management, demands for advanced patient assessment, and growing complexities of American healthcare overall, clearly mandate that respiratory therapists achieve formal academic preparation commensurate with an advanced **provider practice** role.

The primary purpose of a formal respiratory care educational program is to prepare competent respiratory therapists for practice across multiple health care venues. Respiratory care educational programs are offered at ~~technical and community~~ **two-year** colleges, four-year colleges, and universities. **The preferred** Training and education for entry-to-practice as a respiratory therapist should be provided within programs awarding a bachelor's **baccalaureate** or master's degree in **Respiratory Care** (or equivalent degree titles). **If such programs are not available then entry level, associate degree programs should offer a pathway to obtaining a baccalaureate degree in Respiratory Care (or equivalent degree titles).** **Since January 1, 2018** and all newly accredited respiratory care educational programs must award, as a minimum, the bachelor's **baccalaureate** degree in **Respiratory Care** (or equivalent degree title). Associate degree respiratory care programs which are currently accredited **hold continuing accreditation** by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) are ~~should be allowed to continue in good standing as long as they remain in compliance with all other CoARC policies and standards.~~ The AARC supports existing and future articulation agreements between

~~associate and baccalaureate respiratory therapy programs.~~ **encourages all** ~~R~~  
respiratory therapists to obtain a baccalaureate degree.\* **Respiratory therapists**  
seeking to practice in advanced **practice** clinical settings, leadership roles, research,  
and in professional educator roles should seek higher education at the masters or  
doctoral levels.

**\*The AARC Statement of Continuing Education, 2015, “The AARC encourages  
Respiratory Therapists who have completed the required entry level education to  
pursue baccalaureate and graduate degrees relevant to their professional  
pursuits.”**

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