

TITLE: A STATE-WIDE SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR INCREASING RESPIRATORY THERAPIST EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

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Background: In order to expand services, achieve new competencies, and adopt new roles such as Patient Educator, Disease Manager, and Pulmonary Navigator; The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) has recommended increasing future educational standards for Respiratory Therapists.¹ Because of potential licensure changes needed to coincide with increased educational requirements, the North Carolina Respiratory Care Board (NCRCB) conducted a state-wide survey of Directors/ Managers of Respiratory Care Departments regarding future changes in credentialing and changes in educational standards. The purpose of this survey was to quantify support from Respiratory Care department managers for increasing educational standards for Respiratory Therapists in the future.

Methods: A voluntary, anonymous, electronic survey was developed and sent state-wide to all Directors/Managers of Hospital-based Respiratory Care departments throughout North Carolina (n=136). The survey focused on the current and projected job description requirements, salary changes, recognition, and organizational support for increased educational standards for the baccalaureate degree as entry level to the profession.

Results: A total of 34 (n=34) licensed Directors/Managers of Respiratory Care departments completed the survey, for a state-wide 25 % response rate. Reported responses are summarized in the table, which follows this abstract. Key findings included (1) strong management support (82%) for increasing future educational standards, (2) a high percentage (85%) of hospitals/foundations providing available scholarships/organizational grants for continuing education for Respiratory Therapists, (3) Some degree (47%) of current clinical ladder implementation to provide incentives for advanced degree completion, (4), no expected increase in salary (91.0%) for current staff who complete an advanced degree (5) Some projected ability (71%) to expand services when staff obtain an advanced degree, (6) much value (100%) placed upon increasing access to advanced education by expanding the number of universities offering baccalaureate degree programs.

Conclusions: This study has identified substantial, state-wide management support for increasing educational standards for Respiratory Therapists in the future. Although institutional resources exist to support current staff continuing their education, this study has also identified the need to pursue clinical ladder implementation as an incentive for existing staff to further their education; since salary increases were not projected for current staff who choose to obtain an advanced degree.

PRESENTATION TYPE: Original study

State-Wide Survey of Management Support for Increasing Respiratory Therapist Educational Standards

Survey Question	Statewide Frequency Reported	Percentage of Responses
Would you value additional Bachelor degree programs in North Carolina? (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 34	100 %
As leaders in Respiratory Care, do you feel it is very important to increase educational requirements for Respiratory Care profession in the future? (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 28	82%
Does your hospital, organization, or foundation provide educational assistance/scholarships to Respiratory Therapists (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 29	85 %
At present, does your department have a clinical ladder in place which recognizes and rewards an advanced degree (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 16	47 %
At present, does your hospital provide an increase in salary for Respiratory Therapists who obtain an advanced educational degree (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 3	9 %
Do you expect your hospital to provide an increase in salary for Respiratory Therapists who obtain an advanced degree in the future? (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 7	22%
Could your department expand its services by implementing higher educational standards? (Answer of “Yes”)	n = 24	71%

1. Reference: American Association for Respiratory Care. Development of Baccalaureate and Graduate Degrees in Respiratory Care: A White Paper from the AARC Steering Committee of the Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education. AARC Website: www.AARC.org