



CRITICARE 2010

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Respiratory Therapists in Critical Care

Respiratory Therapy Respiratory Therapy as a health care profession is popular in the USA, with over 47,000 of them spread across all the intensive care units of the vast country. In India this specialty has been introduced around 1995 and is now growing slowly but steadily.

Great demand It is not an exaggeration to say that trained Respiratory Therapists will be great demand for employment in the Intensive care units in all leading tertiary care hospitals of India. Respiratory Therapy as a rule is practiced under medical direction. Knowledge and understanding of the scientific principles underlying cardiopulmonary physiology and pathophysiology, as well as biomedical engineering and technology, enable respiratory therapists to provide patient care services effectively.

The strength of respiratory therapists The strength of respiratory therapists lies in the use of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines allowing them to develop, recommend and implement effective care plans. In collaboration with physicians they can develop disease-based clinical pathways, and disease management programs. A systematic training in the operation of Mechanical Ventilators and appropriate use of various modes of ventilation make them an integral part of the health care team in an Intensive Care Unit.

The curriculum The curriculum in Respiratory Therapy Education includes thorough coverage of all aspects of airway care, mechanical ventilation as well as disease management such as Asthma, ARDS, Pneumonia and COPD.

Work Areas A variety of venues serve as the practice site for this health care profession including, Acute Care Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Medical Equipment companies and suppliers, sleep disorder centers and diagnostic laboratories such as Pulmonary Function Laboratory. Their role involves patient evaluation, recommendation of treatment, and manage patients of all ages with cardiopulmonary disorders. Respiratory therapists' can be utilized in assessing cardiopulmonary status of patients, obtaining blood samples, blood gas analysis, pulmonary function testing and importantly, in managing patients receiving mechanical ventilation. They are trained to assist during invasive procedures such as bronchoscopy, and tracheal intubation. Moreover, their role in transporting patients receiving mechanical ventilation to different parts of hospital for diagnostic procedures (CT scan, MRI etc) is also an added skill respiratory therapists can offer. They can be utilized in managing neonates, pediatric and adult patients in critical care arenas.

Respiratory therapists are versatile members of the health care delivery system.