

Respiratory Care Board of California Professional Qualifications Committee (PQC) APRT Discussion / Recommendation

It is widely anticipated that California will see a growing need for medical services in the coming decades and that the money available for funding this burden will not be adequate to keep up with current levels of care. Efficiencies must be sought to serve our population.

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC), the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC), and the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) teamed up to investigate the feasibility of establishing an Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist (APRT) role in the profession.¹

According to CoARC, “The Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist (APRT) practitioner is trained to provide a scope of practice exceeding that of the registered respiratory therapist (RRT). Having earned a Bachelor of Science degree in respiratory therapy and obtained the NBRC RRT credential, the aspiring APRT must complete a CoARC-accredited graduate-level education and training program that prepares graduates to provide diagnostic and therapeutic clinical practice and disease management that is evidenced-based and performed at an advanced level.

As part of a physician-led team, APRTs provide diagnostic and therapeutic patient care services in multiple settings across the health care spectrum, including critical care, acute and sub-acute in-patient care, and outpatient care, such as preventative, ambulatory, and chronic care.”²

The AARC supports a future that includes the addition of the APRT. The APRT is an educated and trained advanced-practice healthcare professional with a scope of practice beyond a RRT. This will allow higher-level physician collaboration in the responsibilities that include assessing, diagnosing, managing, and treating patients with cardiopulmonary disease.³

CoARC released accreditation standards for APRT education programs in 2016.² The Ohio State University is the only CoARC accredited school in the United States. They currently have 14 APRT graduates working throughout the United States. There are several other schools in the process of establishing their programs.

The VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) became the first organization in the country to create an official APRT role within its system. It is hoped that the APRT position’s growth can be staged so that the VA in states with universities interested in starting an APRT program can add these positions.¹

The North Carolina Respiratory Care Board voted to introduce language into its existing respiratory therapy practice act that adds an Advanced Practice Respiratory Care Practitioner (APRC) akin to the APRT to the state licensure law.⁴ The first APRT educational program in North Carolina will come online at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte sometime this year.

Researchers from an AARC workgroup performed a survey of Physicians specializing in allergy and immunology, anesthesiology, critical care, pediatrics, pulmonology, and sleep medicine to determine the level of support for and interest in hiring an APRT. Overall, 68% of surveyed physicians indicated there is a current need, and 74% indicated there would be a future need. Respondents indicated that the APRT will reduce cost of care and improve quality of care, patient experience, and health care outcomes. Introducing the APRT into these physician specialty practices will provide benefits to the patients and to the facilities that employ them.⁵

Researchers at Loma Linda University performed a survey of California RCP's and found that 91.1% of respondents supported the establishment of the APRT role in California. A majority of respondents, [71.7%], believed that APRT should require a separate license.⁶

The California Society for Respiratory Care (CSRC) is preparing to advance legislation that establishes APRT as a profession in California. Included in this effort are definitions of the scope of practice, educational requirements and licensure requirements.

The Respiratory Care Board of California is aware of the growing interest in establishing an APRT role in California.

Recommendation:

- 1) To support the development of an Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapy license in California**
- 2) To work with the California Society for Respiratory Care (CSRC) to develop appropriate legislative language.**

References:

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