

April 2020

HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS

The Rural AHEC Student Newsletter



April's Healthcare Career Focus:

Respiratory Therapist

Respiratory Therapists work closely with patients who experience difficulty with breathing. They need to have a good working knowledge of the equipment needed to support patients and a good "bedside manner" to ease patients' fears as they help them access the oxygen their lungs need to function. Respiratory therapists often work on a healthcare team, which requires excellent soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

What might I do as a Respiratory Therapist?

Examine and treat patients from infants to seniors with breathing disorders like asthma or emphysema

Perform diagnostic tests, such as measuring lung capacity, EKGs, and stress tests

Monitor and record patient progress

Work closely with a healthcare team which may include patient, nurse, physician, care coordinator, physical and/or occupational therapist, and other healthcare professionals

Teach patients how to take medications and use equipment like inhalers, respirators, and ventilators

Take blood samples and use a blood gas analyzer to test oxygen and carbon dioxide levels

Properly maintain equipment to prevent spread of infection

Work full or part time in a hospital or clinic



How do I become a Respiratory Therapist?

- Take Biology, Chemistry and Anatomy in High School
- Graduate from a Respiratory Therapy Associate's or Bachelor's degree program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC)
- Take and pass the Registered Respiratory Therapist and Certified Respiratory Therapist exams
- Keep license current through renewal and completion of Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

Average Salary:
Low end - \$40,000
High end - \$60,000

What is it really like to be a Respiratory Therapist?

Respiratory therapy has been in the news often of late due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients have relied heavily on the expertise of these healthcare workers to help them survive the effects of the virus on lung function.

A successful respiratory therapist develops the following characteristics:

- Patient and compassionate
- Strong critical thinker and skilled at problem solving
- Skilled at communication and collaboration
- Detail oriented
- Personable and motivated to help people

Meet Ryan, a Respiratory Therapist at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver—

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bm-Z_BVbog



Meet Emily and see what a day in the life of a respiratory therapist is really like in a Career Connections video here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu-z0lib_W0

“It’s always very difficult to see a patient who is suffering and not able to breathe, but by the same token, that’s why a lot of us got into this profession—to be able to help those patients and to be able to provide that level of care at the bedside and support in their time of need...”

Brian Faix

Respiratory Therapy Manager
Alaska Native Medical Center

“Now, more than ever before, the role of the respiratory therapist is vital to the health of our nation. Respiratory therapists sacrifice and dedicate themselves to helping their patients and their communities...”

Tom Kallstrom

Executive Director
American Association for Respiratory Care



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Please contact us if you have questions about healthcare career opportunities or educational pathways to healthcare careers!

Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center (R-AHEC) is one of nine centers in the New York State Area Health Education Center (NYS AHEC) organization. Our mission is to improve health and healthcare through education.

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