The Marginal Returns of Specialty Credentials and Why

Shane Keene, DHSc, RRT-NPS, CPFT, RPSGT, RST
Chairman, Department of Analytical & Diagnostic Sciences
University of Cincinnati
Disclaimer

- The information provided in this presentation is solely the opinion of the presenter and primarily subjective in nature. The only objective data presented are the numerical values provided.
Updates on Credentialing

- NBRC revoked policy 13 allowing baccalaureate-level RT programs to sit for CRT/RRT prior to graduation begins January 2015
- CPFT/RPFT following CRT/RRT written exam model
  - 2 passing cut scores low score CPFT high score RPFT
- CRT pass rate only 50% over the last 3 month testing window 2033 attempted 1086 passes (Oct 1, 2013-Dec 31, 2013)
Credentialing

- **Defined:** the process of assessing and confirming the qualifications of a licensed or certified health care practitioner

http://bphc.hrsa.gov/policiesregulations/policies/pin200222.html
Why Individuals Seek Specialty Credentials

- **Intrinsic Rewards (Internal)**
  - Peer recognition
  - Personal satisfaction
  - Self accomplishment
  - Challenge
  - Competition

- **Extrinsic Rewards (External)**
  - Career ladder
  - Promotion
Qualified RT

- Bachelors prepared Registered Respiratory Therapist “BSRT”
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Department of Health and Human Services
- New designation and language that continues to be used by multiple government agencies. AARC has also incorporated the use of the language in the sponsoring of bills through legislation.
Potential Specialty Credentials (NBRC)

- National Board of Respiratory Care
  - Sleep Disorder Specialist (SDS)
  - Adult Critical Care Specialist (ACCS)
  - Neonatal Pediatric Specialist (NPS)
  - Certified Pulmonary Function Technologist (CPFT)
  - Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist (RPFT)

https://www.nbrc.org/Pages/Examinations.aspx
Credentials Outside of the NBRC (BRPT), (ABSM), (NAECB)

- **Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (BRPT)**
  - Register Polysomnographic Technologist (RPSGT)
  - Clinical Sleep Health (credential acronym unknown at this time; exam is being developed)

- **American Board of Sleep Medicine (ABSM)**
  - Registered Sleep Technologist (RST)

- **National Asthma Educator Certification Board**
  - Certified Asthma Educator (AE-C)
NBRC Credentials by the Numbers (SDS)

- **Sleep Disorder Specialist**
  - Credentialed Practitioners: 268
  - Practitioners attempting the exam last quarter: 14 (13) passed 93%
  - Cost of exam: 300 dollars
  - First time pass rate: 3 year average: 90%
  - ROI – (low) Appears to currently be the least recognized of the sleep credentials partially because of the low number of credentials awarded. Sleep licensure only exists in a handful of states and the number of CoARC accredited add on sleep programs remains relatively low (7).
  - Never really took off because in most states RT can perform sleep duties without needing the credential
NBRC Credentials by the Numbers (ACCS)

- **Adult Critical Care Specialist**
  - Credentialed Practitioners 427
  - Practitioners attempting the exam last quarter 78 (62) passed 79.4%
  - Cost of exam 300 dollars
  - First time pass rate 2 year average 84.5%
  - ROI – (high) Many larger facilities have already incorporated the credential into their career ladders and there seems to be a genuine enthusiasm associated with the credential. I expect it to grow much faster than any of the other existing NBRC credentials. Many facilities have already publicly announced that it will be required of their staff who work in critical care environments.
NBRC Credentials by the Numbers (NPS)

- Neonatal Pediatric Specialist
  - Credentialed Practitioners 11,934
  - Practitioners attempting the exam last quarter 209 (118) passed 56.4%
  - Cost of exam 250 dollars
  - First time pass rate 3 year average 68%
  - ROI – (high) Most children's hospitals require the credential within a year of initial employment. Many practitioners desire to work with this patient demographic
Certified Pulmonary Function Technologist

- Credentialed Practitioners 12,909
- Practitioners attempting the exam last quarter 94 (56) passed 59.5%
- Cost of exam 200 dollars
- First time pass rate 3 year average 64.2%
- ROI – (Medium) Largest number of specialty credentialed practitioners widely recognized. The least expensive of the specialty exams. Very useful in managerial roles.
NBRC Credentials by the Numbers (RPFT)

- Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist
  - Credentialed Practitioners 4,335
  - Practitioners attempting the exam last quarter 22 (12) passed 54.5%
  - Cost of exam 250 dollars
  - First time pass rate 3 year average 72.4%
  - ROI – (low) Probably the most difficult NBRC exam to pass. CPFT exam demonstrates competency in diagnostics RPFT viewed by most as just more of the same. New testing matrix will improve numbers.
NBRC Credentials
(Listed in Order of Importance)

1. Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)
2. Advanced Critical Care Specialist (ACCS)
3. Neonatal Pediatric Specialist (NPS)
4. Certified Pulmonary Function Technologist (CPFT)
5. Sleep Disorder Specialist (SDS)
6. Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist (RPFT)
Other Credentials by the Numbers (RPSGT)

- Registered Polysomnographic Technologist
  - Credentialed Practitioners just over 20,000
  - Cost of exam 450 dollars
  - First time pass rate mean 59%
  - ROI – (medium) Most recognized and accepted sleep credential in the world. Very expensive up front to take the exam. Home sleep testing and the acceptance of dental appliances will impact the number of sleep workers needed in the future.
Other Credentials by the Numbers (RST)

- Registered Sleep Technologist
  - Credentialed Practitioners 6732
  - Cost of exam 250 dollars
  - First time pass rate not available on public web site
  - ROI – (medium) ABSM is primarily physician led and has a strong lobbying force. Very slow to catch on most of the credentialed RST practitioners were grandfathered in as RPSGTs
Certified Asthma Educator

- Credentialed Practitioners 4796
- Cost of exam 295 dollars
- First time pass rate 67.7%

ROI – (high) COPD and asthma education are hot topics and RT education could be reimbursable in the near future. Additionally, the Affordable Care Act has forced healthcare to allocate more resources for patient education.
Most credentials are not directly related to scope of practice

- Currently no state licensure requires a respiratory therapist to have anything more than the CRT or RRT credential

- The exception would be the sleep credentials, a handful of states currently have sleep licensure laws that generally mandate practitioners have a sleep credential as a pathway to licensure.
Why Marginal Returns (Poor Leadership)

- RT Department have to raise the bar for their employees
  - Sometimes you have to force people to do things for their own good
  - All RT Departments should have career ladders (if you do not, you are already way behind)
    - Specialty credentials should be recognized as part of the career ladder
    - Every effort should be made to assign employees with specialty credentials to the corresponding work areas
      - For example: ACCS-ICU, CPFT or RPFT- diagnostics, etc
The Good News

- How are specialty credentials currently being rewarded
  - Many facilities are matching work areas with credentials and requiring certain specialty credentials upon hire or shortly thereafter (children’s hospitals usually require NPS)
  - Some employers are reimbursing for specialty credentials
  - Any facility that has a career ladder in place or that is in the process of developing one has incorporated specialty careers
  - All specialty credentials are renewable with CEUs - you never have to pass the examination, but once
  - The opportunities for specialized practitioners will be even greater moving forward as some of the AARC 2015 initiatives start to unfold
Things to Consider

**Specialty credentials**
- The credentials not only cost money to obtain up front for the exam fee, but also requires a lifetime of maintenance
  - Most credentials have to be renewed with CEUs and a renewal fee every 5 years
- Credentials do not guarantee you will be working within that specialization
  - This is based upon skill set needs and the culture of your work environment
- It is predominately a personal choice; there will always be work opportunities without specialty credentials. Generalists fill the lion share of the work force in all allied health care fields
Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist (APRT)

- **Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist**
  - Physician extender (similar to nurse practitioner, physician assistant)
  - Master’s level graduate degree
  - Would the first credential since the RRT that would result in a change of the scope of practice.
“Credentials are like muscles: flex them if you got them”

Doug Masini, Ed.D, RRT-NPS, RPFT, AE-C, FAARC

Contact: keenekn@uc.edu