

## **The Respiratory Therapy Extender**

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#### **What Is a RT Extender?**

Any allied health professional or student who volunteers during a pandemic or disaster when a critical surge of ventilator patients occurs.

#### **The Projected Need**

In the event of a pandemic, it is projected that up to 118% of available ventilators may be in use for flu patients

State and national agencies are purchasing additional ventilators

In any other type of disaster (man-made or natural), the same may happen

Up to 30% of staff may be out ill or not reporting to work

Therefore there may be more work than staff can handle

#### **The Historical Need**

Stories of the 1950's polio epidemic

Medical students hand ventilated 4 patients at a time

Family members hand ventilated loved ones

#### **Liability and The RT Extender**

In Wisconsin a state expert panel on human resources is studying the how and when to change the norm

When changed, the issue of liability will be addressed

Extenders will work under the license of a trained professional

#### **Resources**

Project XTREME

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.ahrq.gov/prep/projxtreme/>

#### **The RT Extender**

Could be anyone trained or in the process of training in allied health

Nursing assistants

Other professions (OT, PT, or anyone who is available)

Students

Dependant on licensure laws and institutional policy

The role is yet to be defined

The need is projected

### **The Potential Job Description**

Work under the direct supervision of a licensed therapist

Monitor patients on ventilators

Make minor changes in settings

Suction artificial airways

Clean and set-up ventilators

Monitor medication delivery

The Potential Job Description

Monitor lab results

Respond to and report alarms

Provide manual ventilation

Monitor non-invasive ventilation

### **Training**

This training program is a start

Competency assessment is still required

Above all else – do no harm

### **Conclusion**

Review all presentations

Work under a licensed professional

Always ask questions

Never do anything that you are unsure of

Volunteer if asked

Feel good for what you are doing