

The Value of Obtaining the RRT-ACCS Credential

The Adult Critical Care Specialist, or RRT-ACCS credential, is a specialty credential developed to validate the knowledge and skills a registered respiratory therapist has in adult critical care. The test for this credential was first administered in July 2012. Earning this credential makes visible to patients, families, peers and employers the personal commitment respiratory therapists have for delivering the highest quality of care to critically ill patients. It also signifies an increased ability to administer technical devices, such as selective pulmonary vasodilators, other pharmacology, ECMO and more.

The RRT-ACCS examination is available for respiratory care professionals who have proven their dedication to excellence by earning the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential and have held that credential for at least one year. The examination fee is \$300 for new applicants and \$250 for re-applicants. There are 170 multiple-choice items (150 scored and 20 pretest) included in the exam. The candidate is given four hours to complete the RRT-ACCS examination.

“When I learned of the development and eventual release of the testing material for the RRT-ACCS examination, I promised myself I would be one of the first applicants to take the exam in my state. Since its infancy of development, I always had an interest in advancing my knowledge in the critical care arena and believed obtaining this credential would underscore my commitment to my profession and to the safety and beneficial outcomes of my patients. I’ve always held a firm belief that your professional return will parallel your professional investment. Further, since the release of the RRT-ACCS credential and testing material just over 10 years ago, the critical care environment has continued to become more sophisticated and more demanding with newer technology in mechanical ventilation, mechanical circulatory support, pharmacological support, research and instituting evidence-based practice. These advancements not only will continue but will require the specialty care that the practicing respiratory therapist needs to be proficient in, which by obtaining the RRT-ACCS credential, can validate,” said Jon C. Inkrott, RRT, RRT-ACCS, Flight Respiratory Therapist, AdventHealth Orlando.

The RRT-ACCS credential is confirmation that the recipient’s registered respiratory therapist knowledge goes above and beyond general respiratory care activities to include a focus on competencies unique to adult critical care. Displaying the RRT-ACCS credential signals to employers, colleagues and patients that the depth of your knowledge and skills are broad and specialized to the care of the critically ill adult patient.

The benefit of earning this credential as a practicing registered respiratory therapist shows investment by the candidate to the profession and interest in delivering the highest quality of care. Additionally, the RRT-ACCS credential demonstrates to an employer your sustained interest in advancing your career.

The value it adds to one’s career is a return on investment. What you put into your career is returned PLUS added value to the interprofessional team. It is inspiring to others and says you are doing your absolute best for the patients you care for. Any specialty credential adds value because it shows the candidate cares about what they do and who they are with respect to their specialty. Holding the RRT-ACCS specialty credential can also advance your career in other areas of the respiratory profession, whether as an ICU lead or supervisor, belonging to a transport team, practicing as an ECMO specialist and more.

Care of the critically ill is a passion for many respiratory therapists. The practice of respiratory care evolves continually and requires the ability to quickly show the critical care team the level of expertise they can expect from a therapist, especially one they have never worked with. The RRT-ACCS credential provides an additional layer of skill and commitment to providing the best respiratory care possible.

The RRT-ACCS specialty credential strengthens relationships between knowledgeable and highly skilled respiratory therapists and contributes to the success of a high-functioning team. It is an unspoken nod of respect between therapists you know while caring for patients in your own institution or therapists you have never met while transferring care of a patient to another facility. Seeing that credential generates confidence that the patient will receive excellent care.

“As a critical care anesthesiologist, I have the pleasure of working alongside respiratory therapists in multiple environments like the PACU and ICU. While I enjoy my clinical time in both the operating room and intensive care unit, I find the time spent on multidisciplinary rounds to be especially fruitful. Having an RRT-ACCS credentialed therapist on the rounds is particularly helpful as it implies added knowledge and skills unique to critically ill patients. Individuals that pursue this credential distinguish themselves from their peers, advance one's career opportunities, and represent dedication to their profession and their patients,” said Beth M.T. Teegarden, MD, FASA, Associate Professor, Anesthesiology University of Texas Medical Branch.

Whether you are a respiratory therapist in an ICU, emergency department, in the back of an ambulance, or a helicopter, earning this credential demonstrates to the care team that your knowledge and practice exceed the standard.