

The Neonatal/Pediatric Respiratory Care Specialty (NPS) credential validates the skills, knowledge, and expertise of a respiratory therapist in the care of infants and children. Respiratory therapists working in this highly specialized area must possess a wide range of unique skills that go far beyond those of a general practitioner and perform competencies that navigate a lifetime. The examination for this credential was first administered in March of 1991 and is currently available for respiratory care professionals who have proven their dedication to excellence by earning the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential. The examination consists of 140 multiple-choice questions (120 scored items and 20 pretest items), candidates are given up to three hours to complete the exam.

Respiratory therapists specializing in the care of infants and children must possess a separate and unique skill set, not only are the patients smaller and younger, the diagnoses are different, and the management of the patients are also very different. The anatomy and physiology as well as equipment required to care for this diverse population is highly variable. It is imperative to recognize these differences and to be proficient in a multitude of settings and wide range of patient scenarios. The RRT-NPS exam reflects the components of this highly specialized aspect of care to this specific patient population.

The RRT-NPS credential signifies that a registered respiratory therapist has invested in themselves by earning an advanced credential that is associated with the clinical expertise of those respiratory care competencies unique to the neonatal and pediatric general and critical care areas. Clinical competencies might range from resuscitation of the preterm neonate weighing less than one pound with underdeveloped lungs or managing a three-day old following open-heart surgery, or a toddler with a congenital neuromuscular disorder, to an adolescent following a traumatic chest wall injury. Being able to function as a neonatal pediatric specialist is not only an intellectual accomplishment, but it also has an element of emotional intelligence as well. The RRT-NPS needs to be able to focus on the current task to save a life and separate the sometimes-difficult emotions in the moment to provide the best possible care.

Being an employee with the RRT-NPS credential means that you have the clinical expertise to manage pediatric emergencies whenever or wherever they occur in your organization. This is a valuable return on investment because regardless of how big or small your organization is, kids will come, babies will be born, and they will need our services; knowing how to provide those services is priceless. If you work in a Children's Hospital, having the RRT-NPS credential is almost essential for professional advancement because it says something about your commitment to your career and your dedication to professionalism. As a hiring manager, the preference is to hire other respiratory therapists who also have taken the initiative to invest in themselves and earn their RRT-NPS credential.

Kathy Fedor, MBA, RRT, RRT-NPS, CPFT, FAARC earned her RRT-NPS credential in March 1991 when it first became available and couldn't wait to display the credential that she was so proud to have earned. Being a good respiratory therapist was a goal, being a neonatal pediatric respiratory therapist soon became her passion, but being a really good neonatal pediatric respiratory therapy clinician that is able to make a difference is what makes her come to work every day for the past 38 years. Kathy recalls: "there have been many personal and professional moments over the years that remind me of that, but one that sticks in my mind is the morning that I came home after working a night shift and as I was pulling into my driveway a van pulled in behind me, (I had no idea who it was) a woman got out and asked me if she could show me her twins that I had cared for 6 months earlier and how well they were

now doing in part because of some role that I had played in their care, it brought me to tears, she remembered me and recognized me in my driveway as I was getting out of my car, she took the opportunity to stop, but more than that she remembered the contribution I had made to the care of her twins. That's why I do what I do."

Early on in her career, Joyce A. Baker, MBA, RRT, RRT-NPS, AE-C, FAARC never intended to work with neonatal and pediatric patients. Overtime she was encouraged to get trained in the PICU then NICU as professional growth opportunities. Reluctantly she agreed, but over time came to love this patient population. Joyce shares: "the NICU where I was working was very progressive and encouraged respiratory therapists to get their neonatal pediatric specialty credential. By having the RRT-NPS credential the NICU providers allowed us to function at the top of our scope of practice which included intubation, assisting with chest tube insertion and umbilical line placement, attending high risk deliveries, and ventilator weaning. Also, I have worked within multiple pediatric and congenital cardiac intensive care units around the country. When providers realized I was credentialed as a neonatal pediatric specialist it felt like they had a higher level of confidence in my skills, knowledge, and expertise when they frequently looked to me to provide recommendations around optimizing cardiopulmonary care."