Registered Respiratory Therapist* (AAS Non-Transfer Degree)

Health Science Career Cluster

SAN JUAN COLLEGE

NATURE OF WORK

Respiratory therapists are health care professionals who care for patients having trouble breathing or patients who have cardiopulmonary disorders. Therapists assess all ages of patients from infants through the elderly. A respiratory therapist measures a patient's pH, by taking a blood sample and placing it in a blood gas analyzer. This provides the therapist with the acidity or alkalinity level of the blood. Respiratory therapists also help to determine if a patient has any lung deficiencies by having the patient breathe into an instrument that measures the volume and flow of oxygen while inhaling and exhaling. The therapist compares the patient's results to the norm, thus determining if there are medical problems. The results are given to a physician who recommends a course of treatment.

WORKING CONDITIONS

A typical work week consists of 35-40 hours. Home health care and hospital settings often employ this profession. Therapists may be required to stand on their feet for long periods of time in hospitals and if working for a home health care organization will spend a considerable amount of time traveling from place to place visiting their patients. Respiratory therapists work with gases stored under pressure and may be exposed to infectious diseases; therefore, they must take safety precautions.

TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS

A career as a respiratory therapist requires a minimum of an Associate Degree but most therapists have a Bachelors Degree. This course of study requires science and math classes such as physics, microbiology, human anatomy and chemistry. A license is required to work as a Respiratory Therapist. Most employers prefer Respiratory Therapists to be certified. A certified therapist has passed the test given by the National Board for Respiratory Care.

JOB OUTLOOK

The growth rate for employment and job outlook in the respiratory therapist field is expected to be very good. Hospitals will be the employer that hires the majority of therapists. Home health care positions are second and are on the increase. This field is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through 2018.

As of February 25, 2010

CAREER OPTIONS

Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT)
Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)

ESTIMATED SALARY RANGE

New Mexico- Starting- $42,000
NM State Average- $52,500—$61,200
Nationally — $44,490—$61,720

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Pulmonary Function Technologists, Sleep Lab Technologists, Emergency Medical Technicians, Paramedics, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Registered Nurses, Radiation Therapists and Athletic Trainers

SJC Basic Program Requirements

Program Admission Requirements:

- Admission into the program is highly competitive.
- Respiratory Therapy Admissions Scoring Criteria will be used in the selection process
- For the full description of admission requirements go to: www.sanjuancollege.edu/pages/5013.asp

For further information go to:
www.sanjuancollege.edu/rt
www.bls.gov/oco/ocos084.htm
www.collegegrad.com/careers/proft86.shtml

*Most of this information is from the Occupational Outlook Handbook—2010-2011 and the SJC School of Health Sciences' Respiratory Therapist Program Director