

(The following resolution has been approved by the ACCP Health and Science Policy Committee and the ACCP Board of Regents.)

American College of Chest Physicians
Respiratory Care NetWork

RESOLUTION

Role of Respiratory Care Practitioners in the Delivery of
Respiratory Care Services

In today's ever-changing health-care field, efforts have been made to decrease costs by having a variety of health-care providers deliver respiratory care services. We are concerned that the quality of these services may be inferior if the health-care provider has not had adequate training and experience. Respiratory care practitioners (RCPs) are particularly qualified to assess patients with respiratory problems and to deliver the various modalities of respiratory care because of their unique educational background and training. Their profession has assured practitioner competence by requiring national accreditation of all training programs. This is supplemented by a national credentialing mechanism, often linked with state licensure. Continued competence is bolstered in almost every state by the legal requirement for continuing education in respiratory care. Further, RCPs provide these services under the direction of a qualified medical director.

Because RCPs have specialized training and experience, they play a vital role in the coordination and utilization of respiratory care services. This role is particularly pertinent in this era of managed care, which has resulted in an increased severity of illness in hospitalized patients, as well as in those cared for in their homes and other out-of-hospital sites. Although other health-care providers may possess the necessary training and experience to deliver simple modalities of respiratory care, the RCP is uniquely qualified to assist the physician in assessing the overall respiratory needs of patients and in recommending and delivering the necessary care. Respiratory care modalities can be most beneficial and cost-effective when the RCP functions within the guidelines of physician-approved respiratory care protocols.

In order to assure the safety, quality, and appropriateness of respiratory care services delivered to the patients in need, the American College of Chest Physicians strongly endorses the essential role of the competent RCP in providing respiratory care under the direction of a qualified

medical director. – Originally published in the October 1997 issue of *ChestSoundings*, updated April 2005.