

## Facts about the Critical Need for Respiratory Therapists

### About the Profession of Respiratory Therapy

- Respiratory therapy is a specialized field of medicine that offers a diverse and growing range of career paths.
  - Many respiratory therapists work in hospitals, including intensive care units, emergency departments, neonatal/pediatric units, operating rooms and sleep labs. Careers for respiratory therapists are also growing in air/ambulance transport and skilled nursing facilities.
  - Other respiratory therapists work in primary care, home care, case management and patient education, fulfilling a key role in helping patients with breathing disorders avoid emergency care and hospitalization.
- Unlike other clinicians on a patient's care team, respiratory therapists receive advanced training to manage life support or ventilation systems, administer aerosol-based medication, manage artificial airways, assess lung capacity, and provide many other specialized skills that help keep patients breathing.

### About the Growing Need for Respiratory Therapists in the U.S.

- COVID-19 has cast a sudden spotlight on the vulnerability of those with respiratory illnesses, and the lifesaving measures taken by those who care for them. But the need for more respiratory therapists was growing before the COVID-19 crisis and will continue to grow after it.
- More than 100 million Americans are affected by respiratory disorders, and approximately 15 percent – or more than 125 million patient visits a year – are for respiratory-related illnesses.<sup>1</sup> There are many reasons for the increasing demand, most notably the aging population.
- Jobs for respiratory therapists are projected to grow 21 percent from 2018 to 2028, which is higher than healthcare jobs in general (13 percent) and all occupations combined (5 percent).<sup>2</sup> And yet, the number of practicing respiratory therapists has been gradually declining by a rate of 4-7 percent in recent years.<sup>1</sup>
- Today, there are about 175,000 active, credentialed respiratory therapists in the United States.
- To reverse the trending shortage so the health industry can meet rising demand for respiratory care – both for the current COVID-19 crisis and beyond – the NBRC aims to inspire people to join the field and make a difference by advancing the respiratory therapy profession.
- [MoreRTs.com](https://www.moreRTs.com) features a growing collection of video stories, told by respiratory therapists and the physicians who work alongside them. Respiratory therapists are invited to submit their own videos at MoreRTs.com.

### About The National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC)

- With the mission of promoting excellence in respiratory care by awarding credentials based on high competency standards, the NBRC seeks to protect and enhance patient lives.
- Nearly 30,000 candidates test for NBRC credentials each year to demonstrate how excellence defines them across seven specific areas of respiratory care. The NBRC's NCCA-accredited examinations provide a rigorous assessment of the skills and strengths required for the highest-quality respiratory patient care.

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Research and Markets: Respiratory Disorders in United States, Forecast to 2022. December 2019.  
<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4900518/respiratory-disorders-market-in-united-states>

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Respiratory Therapists, on the Internet at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/respiratory-therapists.htm> (visited April 14, 2020).

