

## Essential Skills and Abilities — Respiratory Therapy

### Essential Skills

The following list contains information regarding essential skills outlining the physical abilities and behavioral characteristics necessary for the student to successfully participate in and complete the respiratory therapist program. These standards are not conditions of admission, but reflect the performance abilities and characteristics necessary to successfully complete requirements for respiratory care.

The student should carefully look over the essential skills for the program and ask questions if not familiar with the activities or functions listed. The student must decide if he or she has any limitations that may restrict or interfere with satisfactory performance of any of the requirements. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to meet these essential skills if accepted into the respiratory therapist program.

The student should consult with the program director or the director of clinical education to discuss any individual situation if he or she may not be able to meet these essential performance requirements.

- **Hearing** — Able to hear and understand patients and staff; assess and monitor patient sounds
  1. Communicate and interact with patients, staff, and families from a variety of cultural backgrounds.
  2. Follow verbal instructions.
  3. Use a stethoscope to hear heart and breath sounds.
  4. Detect and discriminate between sounds of normal conversation.
  5. Hear percussion sounds during patient assessment.
  6. Ability to hear sounds of a variety of equipment alarms.
- **Mobility** — Mobile and strong enough to support and move patients. Able to work remaining in a standing position for 60-90 minutes. Able to move quickly from place to place to perform patient care.
  1. Support and transfer patients safely from bed to wheelchair, and modify patient position in bed.
  2. Move in and out of treatment areas.
  3. Respond to emergency situations in a timely manner.
  4. Reach equipment and parts of patient's body.

5. Reach above shoulder height to manipulate equipment.
  6. Reach below waist level to manipulate equipment.
  7. Read fine print, monitors, and gauges.
  8. Differentiate color/character of sputum for signs/nature of infection/disease.
  9. Chart (write) procedures and observations legibly in a permanent medical record.
  10. Ability to see and discriminate between a variety of equipment visual alarms.
  11. Ability to observe demonstrations and patients close up and at a distance to learn skills and to gather patient data (e.g., observe a patient's gait, appearance, posture, etc.).
- **Motor Skills (fine and gross)** — Perform multiple motor tasks simultaneously. Fine and gross motor skills sufficient to handle equipment and provide safe and effective patient care; steady arm and hand movements while manipulating objects or assisting patients. Able to lift 40 pounds.
    1. Operate and manipulate equipment; multiple operations may be required.
    2. Prepare blood collection syringes; draw venous and arterial blood samples.
    3. Manipulate a syringe and needle to prepare medications.
    4. Administer aerosols, suction patients, and adjust pressure gauges.
    5. Lift and transport oxygen cylinders; attach regulators; move in and out of treatment areas.
    6. Push/pull hospital beds; transport patients.
    7. Lift and move patients safely.
    8. Perform airway management and CPR.
  - **Visual** — Able to monitor and assess patient and equipment function; to provide safe and effective respiratory care.
    1. Read written instruction/orders.
    2. Read fine print, monitors, and gauges.
    3. Differentiate color/character of sputum for signs/nature of infection/disease.
    4. Chart (write) procedures and observations legibly in a permanent medical record.

5. Ability to see and discriminate between a variety of equipment visual alarms.
  6. Ability to observe demonstrations and patients close up and at a distance to learn skills and to gather patient data (e.g., observe a patient's gait, appearance, posture, etc.).
- **Tactile** — Able to assess patient's response to therapy tactilely.
    1. Distinguish textures, degrees of firmness, temperature differences, pulse rate, vibrations and strength.

## **Essential Function**

All individuals, including persons with disabilities, who apply for admission to the respiratory therapist program, must be able to perform specific essential functions with reasonable accommodations. Essential functions are the basic activities that a student must be able to perform to complete the curriculum and function as a respiratory therapist. A respiratory therapist student must be able to perform these essential functions:

- **Communication:** Students must be able to communicate orally and in writing with patients and members of the healthcare team. Students also must be able to read and comprehend written material in English.
- **Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities:** Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, integrate and apply information. Problem solving, a clinical skill required of therapists, requires all these intellectual abilities.
- **Behavioral and Social Attributes:** Students must possess the emotional health required to use their intellectual abilities fully, such as exercising good judgment, promptly completing all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and developing mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients and other healthcare workers. Students must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties and ambiguities inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are personal qualities that will be assessed during the educational process.
- **Ethical Standards:** A student must demonstrate professional demeanor and behavior and must perform in an ethical manner in all dealings with peers, faculty, staff, and patients.