

JOY A. SMOTHERS, RRT

Nacogdoches, Texas

June 8, 2014

Dear Mr. Luce,

I am a licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP). There are presently 14,614 licensed respiratory care practitioners in Texas.

In May 2014, the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report recommended to discontinue 19 regulatory programs currently housed at the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), which includes the Respiratory Care Practitioners Program (Page4, Issue3 and Pages 106-106, Appendix E).

Licensed RCPs' must complete a specialized, college-based educational training program from an accredited college, and must successfully complete a national credentialing process consisting of rigorous examinations before they are eligible to apply for a state license. They must maintain their level of competency by submitting 24 continuing education credits per two-year renewal period, half of which must be "live".

The organization that provides our credentialing exams does not regulate our profession, nor does the organization that accredits the RT educational programs. The RCP's are regulated by the Texas Respiratory Care Practitioners Program within the DSHS.

The scope of practice for a licensed RCP is complex. The following are just a few procedures that fall within that scope:

- Directly manages highly technical mechanical ventilators providing life support for those patients who are too critically ill to sustain life on their own.
- Routinely administers prescription medications and medical gases such as bronchodilators, antibiotics, oxygen, helium and nitric oxide.
- Assists the physician in the diagnosis and treatment of cardiopulmonary disease by administering diagnostic procedures and by doing patient assessments.
- Works as an integral part of all CPR and Rapid Response Teams providing CPR in all types of health care facilities and to all age groups.
- Provides counseling and rehabilitation to patients with cardiopulmonary disease.
- Functions as member of hyperbaric medicine and extracorporeal life support team.
- Works with critically ill patients in all Intensive Care Units.
- Serves as a valuable member of air and land transport team.

Public health and safety is our greatest concern. Licensed RCPs' are direct patient care providers in a profession where extensive specialized skills and training are required, and a significant potential risk of harm to the public exists from lack of training, education, and competence. The lack of a formal state licensure process in Texas would mean that RCPs' who are incompetent or have lost their license in another state could work in Texas without any review or screening to protect the citizens of Texas.

My recommendation is either not to deregulate RCPs, but for the Respiratory Care Practitioners program to remain with the DSHS, or to be transferred to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.
Sincerely,

Respectfully,

Jay A Smathers, RCP. ART