

# Respiratory Therapists in Vermont

## Summary of March 2005 Survey

Prepared by:

University of Vermont, College of Nursing & Health Sciences

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For more details: (802) 656-3822 • e-mail: shelly.naud@uvm.edu

### Background:

One factor in assuring access to quality health care for all Vermonters is current knowledge of health workforce resources. For that reason, the University of Vermont College of Nursing and Health Sciences conducted the 2005 Respiratory Therapist (RT) survey. Of the 154 licensed Respiratory Therapists in Vermont, 100 completed the survey for a 65% response rate.

In 2003<sup>1</sup>, there were 111,700 RTs employed in the U.S. compared to just 53,000 in 1983. Demand for RTs across the country is expected to rise due to growth of the elder population and related increase in cardiopulmonary disease and respiratory ailments as well as technological advances that have prolonged life. Three-quarters of RTs work in hospital critical care and emergency room settings. In 2005<sup>2</sup>, the RT vacancy rate across 12 of 16 Vermont hospitals reporting was estimated at 5%.

### Education:

#### Degree level first prepared to work as RT:

- High School 3%, Training 25%,
- Associates 63%,
- Bachelors 9%.

#### Highest RT degree earned:

- High School 2%, Training 19%,
- Associates 69%,
- Bachelors 10%.

#### Highest non-RT degree earned:

- High School 37%, Training 6%
- Associates 20%,
- Bachelors 23%,
- Masters 7%.

#### Location of program:

Vermont 39%, New York 9%, New Hampshire 10%, Massachusetts 8%, Other States 35%.

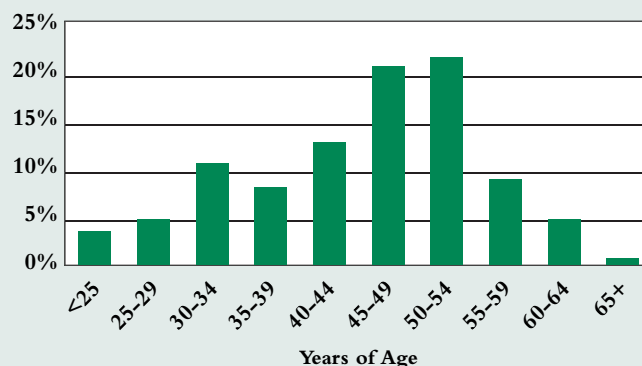
55% participated in a RT Continuing Education program in past 12 months: 18% hospital in-service, 28% other organizations' seminars, 11% other.

### COMPARISON OF US VERSUS VERMONT RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

| Compared to:                      | US RTs*                                   | VT RTs   |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------|
| Mean Age                          | 40 yrs                                    | 44.8 yrs |
| Male Gender                       | 38%                                       | 45%      |
| Caucasian Race                    | 82%                                       | 98%      |
| Mean Annual Salary                | \$34,700 (staff)<br>\$43,700 (supervisor) | \$55,900 |
| Mean RT Years                     | 14 yrs.                                   | 17 yrs.  |
| Mean Years in<br>Current Position | 7 yrs.                                    | 9 yrs.   |

\* In 2000 the National Board for Respiratory Care mandated Associates degree minimum for taking CRT exam.

### AGE OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS



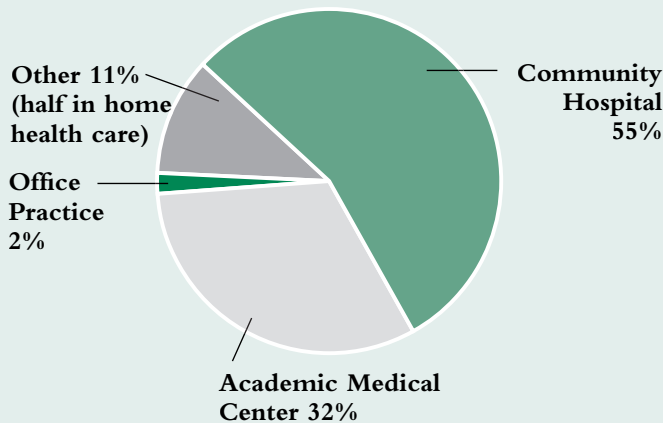
## Employment:

Full time 75%, Part time 17%, Per diem 8%.

## Principal activity, current RT position:

- Patient care 77%,
- Administration 11%,
- Teaching 5%,
- Other 5%.

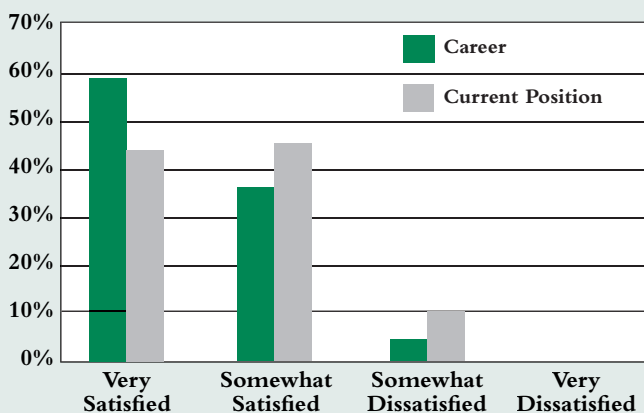
## WORKSITE SETTING, CURRENT RT POSITION



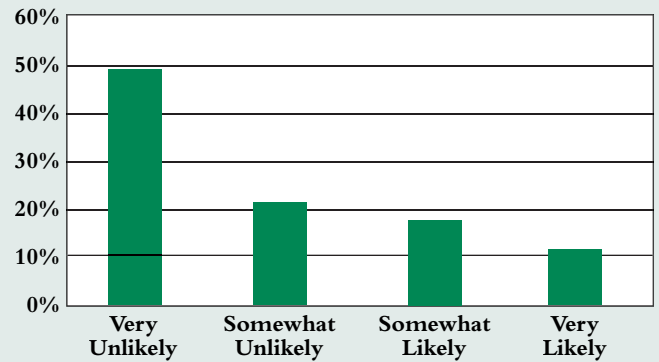
## Would you advise high school or college student to pursue RT career?

Yes 75%, No 13%, Unsure 12%.

## SATISFACTION WITH CAREER AND CURRENT POSITION



## LIKELINESS TO LEAVE POSITION IN NEXT YEAR



## Major Reasons reported for those “Somewhat” or “Very Likely” to leave (n= 28) reported are:

- Position change 57%
- Salary/benefits 36%
- Move or relocate 36%

## Of those Somewhat or Very Likely to leave: Would you leave the profession?

No 46%, Yes 21%, Unsure 29%, No Answer 4%

## Discussion:

The higher mean annual income of VT RTs compared to mean annual salary of US RTs may relate to demographic (>age, male, white) and work setting (>years in career, hospital setting) differences. If Medicare reimbursement was available for RTs in home care,(1) the demand for RTs might rise. Currently, Vermont has only one RT degree program at the Vermont Technical College (at 27 entrants, fall 2005). The fact that VT RTs “likely to leave” the current position list more positive (salary/benefits, move/relocate) than negative (management practices, job stress) reasons is encouraging.

## References:

- (1) Center for the Health Professions, University of California, San Francisco, “Respiratory Care Practitioners in California” (July 2003).
- (2) Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, University of Vermont, “Vermont Health Workforce Assessment Survey” (2005)