

I am a Registered Respiratory Therapist who has practiced in Oregon for the past 40+ years. In 2011 I began a new aspect in my career; along with my responsibilities of managing the Cardiopulmonary and Neurodiagnostic Services at Samaritan Albany General Hospital I was given the opportunity to manage the 4 bed Samaritan Albany Sleep Center. Last year I sat for and passed one of two national credentialing exams, the Registered Polysomnographic Technology (RPSGT) exam.

The Respiratory Therapy and Polysomnographic (PSG) Licensure Act required sleep techs to be licensed beginning Jan 2013. It also allowed on-the-job-trained (OJT) sleep techs to be grandfathered into licensure if they were credentialed through one of the two nationally recognized agencies. Oregon's requirements for licensure are stringent. They are also quite comprehensive in scope allowing PSGs to titrate oxygen and pressure of ventilation. This breadth of practice calls for the same levels of competency and training required by other health professions.

HB 2305 will eliminate the requirement for formal education. The Oregon Health Licensing Agency Respiratory Therapy/Polysomnography advisory board unanimously opposed this change. I believe it is bad practice and puts patients at risk.

Last year Legacy Healthcare approached the OHLA requesting that the education requirement be rescinded. The OHLA Respiratory Therapy and Polysomnographic Technologist Licensing Board rejected their request. Legacy has now gotten HB 2305 introduced in order to achieve their goal.

Legacy maintains they are unable to fill their staffing needs as it is so difficult for out-of-state PSGs to meet Oregon's licensing regulations. They offered three cases where they were "unable" to hire out-of-state OJTs. In reality one of those people was also an RT and as such is able to practice as a PSG tech, another was eligible to sit for the RPSGT exam, did so and passed, the third took a job in California where PSG techs are registered but not licensed.

Both Linn-Benton Community College and Oregon Technical Institute have polysomnography programs. With the health care hiring slump of the past several years many of their graduates have been unable to find employment. Respiratory Therapy graduates have also had difficulty securing employment. RT training makes those graduates very attractive candidates for cross training and they able to practice PSG under Oregon regulations.

As a health care manager I realize that hospitals are in survival mode and are looking at ways to cut costs. I hope we have not reached the point of placing patients at risk in order to save money.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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