What can I do with a major in Respiratory Therapy?

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN RESPIRATORY THERAPY

The healthcare field of respiratory therapy focuses on treating patients with cardiopulmonary (heart/lung) illnesses and breathing difficulties. Armstrong’s program is fully accredited by the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) and has an advanced practitioner, registered respiratory therapist (RRT) outcome goal. Our graduates are eligible to sit for the credentialing exams administered by the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC), and our graduates consistently pass their boards at a rate 20 to 25 percent higher than the national mean. We have a near 100 percent job placement history and our annual graduate employer surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program.

Students in the Respiratory Therapy program will have opportunities to train and observe in sleep, neonatal-pediatrics, long-term acute care, home care, durable medical equipment, cystic fibrosis and asthma patient education, and other diverse diagnostic and patient respiratory care specialties. Students also receive intensive preparation for the board and credentialing examinations. Armstrong has standing agreements with many regional hospitals, and the first four semesters of clinical practicum are done at local hospitals and clinical sites outside of Savannah. In the fifth semester, students may apply for a respiratory therapy externship at hospitals across the states of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Florida. If a hospital and the university agree to provide the student an opportunity, the student may work with a preceptor at a hospital where they would like to be employed after graduation.

Skills and Abilities Associated with Respiratory Therapy Majors

- Active Listening: Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Instructing: Teaching others how to do something.
- Reading Comprehension: Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- Critical Thinking: Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- Monitoring: Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- Time Management: Managing one’s own time and the time of others.
- Operation Monitoring: Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly.
- Active Learning: Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.

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Memorial College Center, Room 101 | 912.344.2563 | careers@armstrong.edu

Possible Job Titles

- Cardiac Technician
- Cardiology Technician
- Cardiopulmonary Technician
- Cardiovascular Technician
- Cardiovascular Technologist (CVT)
- Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT)
- Certified Respiratory Therapy Technician (CRTT)
- Clinical Coordinator of Respiratory Therapy
- Director of Cardiopulmonary Services
- Echo Cardiographer
- EKG/ECG Technician
- Health Specialties Teachers
- Medical Assistants
- Medical and Health Services Managers
- Radiation Therapists
- Registered Cardiovascular Invasive Specialist (RCIS)
- Registered Pulmonary Function Technologist
- Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)
- Registered Cardiac Sonographer (RCS)
- Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP)
- Respiratory Technician
- Respiratory Therapist (RT)
- Respiratory Therapy Director
- Respiratory Therapy Technician
- Staff Respiratory Therapist
Career Opportunities

The U.S. Department of Labor projects a 49 percent increase in demand for respiratory care providers (RCP) in the next 10 years. The scope of practice for the respiratory therapist has expanded during the past 15 years, largely due to advances in medicine and technology.

As the scope of practice has changed, new subspecialty areas in pulmonary and sleep diagnostics, neonatal/pediatric or adult intensive care, rehabilitation, and home care have emerged. Registered therapists may use their education and experience to enroll in physician assistant, anesthetist and perfusionist programs, or medical school. Along with working in hospital settings, our graduates find careers in research clinical trials management, asthma education, private business, health administration, education or management.

Older Americans suffer most from respiratory ailments and cardiopulmonary diseases, such as pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease. As the number of older persons increases, the need for respiratory therapists is expected to increase as well. In addition, advances in inhalable medications and in the treatment of lung transplant patients, heart attack and accident victims, and premature infants—many of whom depend on a ventilator during part of their treatment—will increase the demand for the services of respiratory care practitioners.

Job opportunities are expected to be very good, especially for those with a bachelor’s degree and certification, and those with cardiopulmonary care skills or experience working with infants. The vast majority of job openings will continue to be in hospitals. However, a growing number of openings are expected to be outside of hospitals, especially in home healthcare services, offices of physicians or other health practitioners, consumer-goods rental firms, or in the employment services industry as a temporary worker in various settings.

Additional Resources

American Association for Respiratory Care
www.aarc.org/

Bureau of Labor Statistics - Respiratory Therapists
www.bls.gov/oco/ocos321.htm

National Board for Respiratory Care
www.nbrc.org/

The Journal of Pulmonary Technique
www.respiratorytherapy.ca/