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Competencies of Respiratory Therapist in Cagayan Valley: Basis for Holistic Approach

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Abstract

Aim: This thesis explored the elements that make respiratory therapists in Cagayan Valley, looking at the fundamental knowledge and viewpoints needed to provide complete care in a variety of medical settings. The study assessed current procedures and pinpoints areas that could be improved by combining in-depth data analysis with interviews. It emphasized how vital ongoing education and professional development are to promoting a better-coordinated approach to respiratory treatment. Enhancing patient outcomes and reaffirming the crucial role that therapists play in the healthcare system are the ultimate objectives.

Methodology: Using a purposive sampling and random sampling design, the study involves 107 respiratory therapists around Cagayan Valley.

Results: With a grand mean grade of 3.94, which indicates an overall proficiency in the critical areas of respiratory therapy practice, the ratings vary from competent to expert. This thorough evaluation demonstrates the therapist's broad skill set and proficiency in providing excellent respiratory treatment in a variety of contexts, including patient assessment, management, leadership, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Results also show that there is no significant difference in the competency between the public and private respiratory therapists. This implies a level of competency that is constant in both domains, underscoring the significance of consistent standards in respiratory therapist's practices. Additionally, the total number of respondents is 107, with 48.6% from the public sector and 51.4% from the private sector. This balanced distribution of respondents allows for a fair comparison between the two groups in the ANOVA analysis.

Conclusion: The respondents' proficiency in their industry is a commendable one. However, rooms for improvement to combat the challenges encountered is necessary. The proposed measures have to be executed and be further evaluated and improved for the benefits of the professionals and all stakeholders involved.

Keywords: Competency, Respiratory Therapist, Cagayan Valley, Treatment

INTRODUCTION

Respiratory therapy was a critical healthcare profession focused on diagnosing and therapists played a crucial role in providing quality care to patients, ensuring their safety, and improving health outcomes. According to Zippia (2023), the data science team discovered that approximately there are over 120,602 currently working respiratory therapists in the US. Women make up 76.3% of qualified respiratory therapists, while men make up 23.7%. World Health Organization (2023) states that respiratory therapists frequently performed a severe acute respiratory infection when the novel corona (nCOV) infection was detected.

The role of Respiratory Therapists (RTs) underwent significant expansion and evolution. Traditionally, RTS excelled in hospital settings, particularly in critical care. While this remained true and relevant, there was a notable broadening of profession's scope. Building on the foundation of home care and initiatives like the Extra Mural Program, which transformed homes into healthcare spaces, the role of RTs extended further into the community. Beyond hospital walls, RTs were actively involved in asthma and COPD clinics, community-based pulmonary rehabilitation programs,



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and community health centers. This shift reflected a growing trend of leveraging RT knowledge and expertise to provide crucial treatment and support for individuals living with COPD in community settings.

In the Philippines, Kiven (2021) stated that licensed Respiratory Therapists operated a variety of pulmonary devices, such as mechanical ventilators, etc.; supervised patients and tracked the results of their medical treatments; and helped doctors identify respiratory disorders affecting patients. According to the Commission-issued Resolution No. 1208 (s. 2019) or the "Guidelines on the Accreditation of Informal Work Experience", Section 5, the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Councils determined the appropriate number of CPD credit units to implement. The CPD Council of Respiratory Therapy resolved to issue these guidelines on the evaluation and granting of CPD credit units for activities under Informal Learning and Professional Work Experience, including activities undertaken during the State of Public Health Emergency due to COVID-19 crisis that could earn CPD credit units. Fundamentally, despite the job of a respiratory therapist in Cagayan Valley being demanding even before the pandemic, it became more complicated during pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic in Cagayan Valley is a component of the global coronavirus illness 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, which leads to severe acute respiratory syndrome. When the first incidence of the sickness was identified in Tuguegarao City on March 21, 2020, the virus made its way to Cagayan Valley. Martin (2022) stated that one COVID-19 case was confirmed in each province, with Batanes being the final province to do so on September 28, 2020. One of the primary concerns was the shortage of mechanical ventilators. But respiratory therapists play a particularly important role in aiding patients in battling and recovering from the coronavirus. Respiratory therapists solely focus on the heart and lungs, unlike doctors and nurses who have some knowledge and expertise in every organ system.

This study filled a crucial gap by thoroughly examining competencies for entry into Respiratory Therapy Practice in Cagayan Valley. It specifically addressed key areas such as Collection of Diagnostic, Disease Management, Evidence-Based Medicine, and others, providing a localized perspective often lacking in existing literature. Furthermore, the research investigated potential competency differences between public and private respiratory therapists in the region, contributing unique insights. The study also explored challenges faced by respiratory therapists, proposing measures for competence enhancement. Additionally, it considered broader implications for health management policies in Cagayan Valley. This concise research aimed to inform and advance respiratory therapy practice in the local context.

The researcher was interested in conducting this study because of the crucial importance of respiratory therapists in assisting patients with respiratory conditions, especially during medical emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. What drives the researcher to enhance respiratory practice in the Cagayan Valley is my genuine wish to improve patient outcomes and elevate the level of care, especially in response to the mechanical ventilator scarcity and respiratory complications caused by COVID-19. Due to the researcher's firsthand experience dealing with challenges faced by respiratory therapists and her familiarity with the local healthcare system, she is well-equipped to discuss the required competencies for entering respiratory therapy practice in Cagayan Valley. Conducting this study aligns with her goal of enhancing competence in respiratory therapy, contributing valuable insights, and shaping health management policies in the region to elevate patient care standards.

Objectives

This study determined the competencies for entry into respiratory therapist practice in Cagayan Valley. Specifically, this sought answers to the following:

1. How are the competencies for entry into Respiratory Therapy Practice in Cagayan Valley be described and evaluated along with:
 - a. Collection of Diagnostic;
 - b. Disease Management;
 - c. Evidence-Based Medicine and Respiratory Care Protocols;
 - d. Patient Assessment;
 - e. Leadership;
 - f. Emergency and Critical Care;
 - g. Assessment of Therapist;
 - h. Application of Therapist to Respiratory Care Practice; and



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- i. Overall Competencies?
 2. Is there a significant difference between the competency of the public and private respiratory therapists?
 3. What are the problems encountered by the respondents which affect their competence?
 4. What measures can be proposed to enhance the competency of the public and private respiratory therapist.
 5. What are the implications of the study to health management?

METHODS

Research Design

The researcher used the Quantitative Correlational Research Design in conducting the study. According to Bhandari (2021), a correlational research design looked at how different things are related to each other without the researcher being able to change or affect them. This research design examined the relationship between various factors without the researcher being able to change or influence them. It focused on understanding how variables are related to each other, providing valuable insights into potential connections and associations.

Population of the Study

Using a purposive sampling and random sampling design, the study involved 107 respiratory therapists around Cagayan Valley. Professional Respiratory Therapists with sufficient knowledge and skills in assessing patients were selected as appropriate participants since Respiratory Therapists play vital aspects in the medical field.

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher developed a modified questionnaire for the respondents. The said questionnaire was evaluated, validated, administered, tailed, and scored according to appropriate statistical tools. The questionnaire was crafted by the AARC task force on Competencies for Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice. By aligning the questionnaire with established competencies in respiratory care practice, the researcher ensured that the instrument effectively measured the skills and experiences relevant to the study objectives. The validation process enhanced the credibility and reliability of the questionnaire in capturing the data from the respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

In this study, data were collected following all protocols in the conduct of an academic research. Data were collected in the agreed location of the respondents, mindful of their and the researcher's convenience and safety.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the gathered data, a descriptive research approach was initially used to evaluate and comprehend the competencies required for starting a career as a respiratory therapist in this particular geographical area. The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was also utilized to further analyze the data and assess any significant differences or relationships among the observed variables. ANOVA helps in comparing the means of two or more groups to determine if there are statistically significant differences between them.

Ethical Considerations

In the conduct of the study, the researcher ensured that all ethics in research involving human participants were carefully considered and adhered into. Permits to conduct the study, consent and guidelines were followed in view of the Data Privacy Act of the Philippines.



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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Competencies of Respiratory Therapist Practice

Table 1. Overall Evaluation

Competencies	Mean	Adjectival Rating
Collection of Diagnostic	3.75	Proficient
Disease Management	4.22	Expert
Evidence-Based Medicine and Respiratory Care Protocols	3.20	Competent
Patient Assessment	3.92	Proficient
Leadership	4.20	Proficient
Emergency and Critical Care	3.83	Proficient
Assessment of Therapy	4.04	Expert
Application of Therapist of Respiratory Care Practice	4.39	Expert
Overall Mean	3.94	Proficient

An overview of a respiratory therapist's competencies in relation to several facets of respiratory care practice is shown in the Table 1. The mean adjectival ratings for various competencies are shown.

With a grand mean grade of 3.94, which indicates an overall proficiency in these critical areas of respiratory therapy practice, the ratings vary from competent to expert. This thorough evaluation demonstrates the therapist's broad skill set and proficiency in providing excellent respiratory treatment in a variety of contexts, including patient assessment, management, leadership, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge.

The competencies of a respiratory therapist, including diagnostic collection, disease management, evidence-based medicine, patient assessment, leadership, emergency care, therapy assessment, and application of respiratory care practices, have been evaluated with ratings ranging from Competent to Expert. The first competency, the Collection of Diagnosis achieved a mean of 3.75 categorized as Proficient. Having the ability to collect diagnostics is crucial for delivering top-notch care to patients as a respiratory therapist (Alfaris, et al., 2023).

Performing patient assessments, consisting of physical exams, diagnostic tests, and medical histories, is essential for this skill. Therapists who have expertise in recognizing respiratory illnesses like pneumonia, COPD, or asthma can create customized treatment plans and track improvement. This expertise ensures prompt response and improves patient outcomes by quickly addressing respiratory issues.

Furthermore, the second competency, Disease Management achieved a mean of 4.22 categorized as Expert. When it comes to treating long-term respiratory conditions like COPD and asthma, respiratory therapists are invaluable. Creating individualized care plans, counseling patients on drug use and lifestyle adjustments, and assessing the effectiveness of treatments are some of their duties. They contribute to lower hospitalization rates, improved patient outcomes, and patient quality of life through proactive and ongoing care.

Consequently, Evidence-Based Medicine and Respiratory Care Protocols with the lowest mean of 3.20 which is categorized as Competent. Essential competencies for respiratory therapists include evidence-based medicine and established respiratory care protocols. These include standardizing patient care and guiding treatment decisions with the help of recent research and clinical data. Following evidence-based recommendations guarantees the effectiveness and promptness of interventions, which enhances patient outcomes and preserves consistency in the provision of care. This method also helps with resource optimization and lets therapists provide high-quality, scientifically supported respiratory care.

Additionally, Patient Assessment achieved a mean of 3.92 which is categorized as Proficient. The respiratory

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therapist's core competency is patient assessment, which includes a thorough analysis of the patient's respiratory status. This procedure entails going over medical histories, performing in-depth physical examinations, and using diagnostic instruments including blood gas analysis and spirometry. Therapists can diagnose respiratory diseases, gauge their severity, and set baselines for treatment with accuracy in assessment (Des Jardins & Burton, 2023). This approach enables prompt interventions, tracks the effectiveness of treatment, and supports individualized care plans that are in line with the needs of each patient.

Another competency is leadership which received a mean rating of 4.20 categorized as Proficient. Respiratory therapists need to be leaders because leadership involves good decision-making, teamwork, and communication. Respiratory therapists in the medical field manage teams, plan patient care, and promote the success of treatment. Assuring patient safety, promoting positive change, raising professional standards, and fostering trust, innovation, and high-quality care delivery are all made possible by leadership.

The Emergency and Critical Care achieved a mean rating of 3.83 which is categorized as Proficient. Critical emergency care abilities are a must for respiratory therapists to respond quickly to acute medical situations and provide cutting-edge therapy. They are excellent in the diagnosis and treatment of respiratory emergencies, including acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), trauma-induced respiratory failure, and cardiac arrest. They have the know-how to stabilize patients in critical situations through skilled airway care, oxygen therapy administration, and efficient mechanical ventilation regulation. Having expertise in emergency and critical care allows therapists to offer essential assistance in complicated medical situations, make prompt and informed decisions, and attain optimal results.

Notably, the Assessment of Therapist received a mean rating of 4.04 which categorized as Expert. Continual assessment of treatment efficacy and patient response is necessary for respiratory therapists, making therapy assessment an essential competence. Customizing therapy regimens entails keeping an eye on vital signs, testing lung function, and evaluating clinical results. Therapists improve the quality of patient care, attain superior results, modify treatment plans to suit the specific requirements of each patient, and advance the patient's condition.

The last competency, Application of Therapist to Respiratory Care Practice with the highest mean of 4.39 categorized as Expert. Respiratory therapists that specialize in respiratory care use therapy approaches and interventions to improve respiratory health. This includes doing breathing exercises, supervising the use of ventilators, and giving prescriptions. To make sure these therapies are effective, therapists closely monitor and modify them based on each patient's unique responses. Throughout the course of therapy, this ability is essential for promoting recovery, maximizing respiratory function, and putting the comfort and safety of patients first.

The overall Grand Mean of 3.94 suggests a proficient level of competency across these essential skills, highlighting the therapist's ability to provide quality care while also identifying areas for potential growth and development in respiratory care practice.

Significant Difference Between the Competency of the Public and Private Respiratory Therapists

Table 2. Significant Difference Between the Competency of the Public and Private Respiratory Therapists

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	P-value
Public	1.24416	1	3.3903	1	0.05	0.3196
Private	3.3903	1	3.3903	1	0.05	0.3196
Total	13.28319					

The table displays the findings of a statistical comparison between the qualifications of respiratory therapists working in the public and private sectors. It comprises the comparison's F-value, mean square, degrees of freedom, sum of squares, and significance level (Sig.). The F-value suggests a noteworthy distinction in the competencies of public and private respiratory therapists, as indicated by the research. The results highlight the potential differences in knowledge, skills, or practices between respiratory therapists working in public and private healthcare settings. It is crucial to recognize and address these variations in order to guarantee the best possible respiratory care delivery in both sectors.



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The ANOVA analysis compared the competency of public and private respiratory therapists. The Sum of Squares for the Public group was 1.24416, with 1 degree of freedom, resulting in a Mean Square of 3.3903. Similarly, for the Private group, the Sum of Squares was 3.3903, with 1 degree of freedom, leading to a Mean Square of 3.3903. The total F-value for the Public and Private groups was 1, and the associated p-value was calculated to be 0.3196, exceeding the significance level of 0.05.

Comparing the competency of public and private respiratory therapists revealed a p-value of 0.3196 for the Public group, exceeding the significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, the null hypothesis stated no significant difference in competencies between public and private sector respiratory therapists, and this is supported by the ANOVA analysis. The similarity in Mean Squares, F-values, and P-values between the public and private sectors further reinforces the conclusion that there is no significant distinction in competencies.

Acceptance of the null hypothesis suggests that the competency levels of respiratory therapists from the public and private sectors in the Cagayan Valley region do not significantly impact their overall competency, and the proposed measures for enhancement may not lead to a substantial improvement in their competencies. This outcome implies that the skills and knowledge of respiratory therapists across both public and private sectors in the region are comparable, highlighting consistency in competency levels regardless of the practice setting.

Results show that there is no significant difference in the competency between the public and private respiratory therapists. This implies a level of competency that is constant in both domains, underscoring the significance of consistent standards in respiratory therapist's practices. Additionally, the total number of respondents is 107, with 48.6% from the public sector and 51.4% from the private sector. This balanced distribution of respondents allows for a fair comparison between the two groups in the ANOVA analysis.

Problems Encountered by the Respondents

Table 3. Problems Encountered by the Respondents

Problems	f	%	R
Struggles in effectively communicating with patients, their families, and other healthcare professionals leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.	85	11.69%	1
Patients frequently neglecting to adhere to prescribed treatment plans	84	11.55 %	2
Malfunctioning equipment or difficulties	80	11 %	3
Limited access to necessary equipment, medications, and resources hindering the quality of care provided to patients with respiratory conditions.	79	10.86 %	4
Challenges in managing patients with multiple comorbidities or complex respiratory conditions	77	10.59 %	5
Difficulty staying current with advances in respiratory care practices and continuing education requirements can be challenging	71	9.76 %	6
Managing acute respiratory emergencies	70	9.62 %	7

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The nature of the work, especially in critical care or high-stress environment	66	9.07 %	8
Pursuing ongoing professional development and continuing education to stay abreast of advance in respiratory care practices	61	8.39 %	9
Challenges in adapting to new technologies and integrating them into respiratory care practices effectively.	54	7.42 %	10

The most commonly encountered problems by respiratory therapists is communication challenges, when working with patients, their families, and other medical professionals, respiratory therapists must communicate effectively. Language limitations and cultural disparities, however, might make it more difficult to communicate and provide treatment (Schinkel, et al., 2019). When people speak various languages, miscommunication frequently occurs, which causes uncertainty regarding treatment methods.

The second most frequently reported problem, identified by 84 respondents, was the patient treatment adherence. For respiratory therapists, ensuring patients follow recommended treatment regimens—such as correctly using inhalers or stopping smoking—can be difficult.

Next, equipment problems that may hinder patient care with 80 respondents. Problems with equipment malfunctions or challenges in using advanced respiratory technologies can greatly disrupt patient care for respiratory therapists.

Furthermore, limited access impacts the quality of care provided as the fourth problem encountered by respiratory therapists, was answered by 79 respondents. The quality-of-care respiratory therapists deliver in certain hospital settings can be significantly impacted by the absence of necessary supplies, drugs, and equipment.

Additionally, dealing with patients with complex conditions must require expertise, was provided by 77 respondents. Restoring patients with complicated respiratory problems or many comorbidities requires respiratory therapists to possess a high degree of skill and knowledge.

Next problems encountered by respiratory therapists was staying current with advance respiratory care practice, answered by 71 respondents. It can be challenging to meet continuing education obligations and stay up to date with changes in respiratory care procedures, particularly for therapists who have little access to training options.

Managing acute respiratory emergencies was identified by 70 respondents. One of the biggest challenges facing respiratory therapists is treating acute respiratory emergencies, including attacks.

Moreover, high levels of stress working in critical care was identified by 66 respondents. The demanding nature of their work places respiratory therapists in critical care facilities under a great deal of stress and emotional strain.

Among problems encountered by respiratory therapists, integrating new technologies stand out as the least addressed, given by 54 respondents. It might be difficult for therapists to navigate the uptake and integration of new technologies in respiratory treatment (Whitelaw, et al., 2021). Gaining proficiency with sophisticated machinery, learning new software, and adhering to protocols are all necessary to make sure that technological developments in patient care are seamless. To properly apply these advances and overcome any obstacles along the way and ultimately achieve the best patient outcomes, continuous training and support are essential.



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Measures Propose to Enhance the Competency of Public and Private Respiratory Therapists

Table 4. Measures Propose to Enhance the Competency of Public and Private Respiratory Therapists

Problem Encountered	Measures	Objectives	Strategies	Output
Difficulty in accessing quality and relevant continuing education programs	Continuing Education Programs	Crucial for staying updated with advancements in the field.	Implement mandatory ongoing education programs.	Enhanced knowledge and skills, improved patient care outcomes, and adherence to best practices.
Struggles with meeting the stringent certification and licensure requirements	Certification and Licensure Requirements	Ensures a high level of competency and professionalism.	Strengthen certification standards and require regular assessments.	Increased credibility, standardized competencies, and improved patient safety.
Challenges in securing sufficient clinical training and hands-on experience	Clinical Training and Hands-On Experience	Enhances practical skills and decision-making abilities.	Provide opportunities for diverse clinical training and simulations.	Improved clinical skills, better patient care quality, increased confidence
Issues related to effective communication and collaboration with other healthcare professionals	Interprofessional Collaboration	Fosters a holistic approach to patient care and teamwork.	Encourage collaboration with other healthcare professionals.	Improved care coordination, better patient outcomes, and enhanced interdisciplinary relationships.
Difficulties in staying updated with the latest research findings and integrating evidence-based practices	Research and Evidence-Based	Practice Promotes critical thinking and effective interventions.	Promote research activities and evidence-based practice	Increased use of best practices, innovative solutions, improved patient outcomes.
Obstacles in implementing quality improvement initiatives	Quality Improvement Initiatives	Identifies areas for enhancement and promotes continuous learning	Engage in quality improvement projects and initiatives.	Enhanced patient safety, increased efficiency, improved



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				quality of care delivery.
Limited access to professional development opportunities	Professional Development Opportunities	Exposes therapists to new ideas and trends in the field.	Provide opportunities for attending conferences and workshops.	Expanded skill set, career advancement, increased job satisfaction.
Challenges in finding suitable mentorship programs	Mentorship Programs	Facilitates knowledge transfer, skill development, and career guidance.	Establish mentorship programs for new therapists	Enhanced professional development, increased confidence, improved retention rates.
Issues with adherence to standardized protocols and guidelines	Standardized Protocols and Guidelines	Ensures consistency in practice and quality of care	Develop and implement standardized care protocols and guidelines	Improved patient outcomes, reduced errors, enhanced efficiency.
Difficulties in accessing and utilizing simulation training resources effectively	Simulation Training	Provides hands-on practice in a controlled environment.	Incorporate simulation training for real-life scenarios	Enhanced skills, better preparedness for emergencies, improved patient safety.

A set of suggested actions to improve the proficiency of respiratory therapists working in the public and commercial sectors is shown in Table 4. The aforementioned approaches are intended to tackle multiple facets of professional growth, education, cooperation, investigation, enhancement of quality, and skill development in the respiratory therapy domain. Every measure has clear goals, implementation plans, and expected results that emphasize the significance of ongoing education, certificate requirements, clinical training, interdisciplinary collaboration, research methods and quality improvement projects. Opportunities for professional growth, mentorship initiatives, standardized procedures, and simulation training all contribute to helping respiratory therapists become highly competent and professional (Heuer, Bienstock & Zhang, 2022). By supplying respiratory therapists with the tools, they need to succeed in their position, these suggested actions seek to improve patients' outcomes, advance best practices, and raise the bar for care delivery.

Conclusion

The respondents' proficiency in their industry is a commendable one. With a grand mean grade of 3.94, which indicates an overall proficiency in the critical areas of respiratory therapy practice, the ratings vary from competent to expert. This thorough evaluation demonstrates the therapist's broad skill set and proficiency in providing excellent respiratory treatment in a variety of contexts, including patient assessment, management, leadership, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Results also show that there is no significant difference in the competency between the public and private respiratory therapists. This implies a level of competency that is constant in both



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Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive examination of competencies for entry into Respiratory Therapy in Cagayan Valley, the following recommendations are tailored to various stakeholders:

1. Therapists may pursue ongoing professional development to keep current and enhance their knowledge in critical care areas such as diagnostic data gathering, disease management, and evidence-based medicine.
2. Managers and owners of respiratory treatment establishments may promote continual training and professional development for their employees.
3. Industry players may consider collaborating with educational institutions and healthcare groups to create comprehensive training programs and materials.
4. Hospitals and healthcare facilities may incorporate the study's findings into their clinical practice guidelines and practices.
5. Patients are encouraged to advocate for respiratory therapy services that use evidence-based procedures and focus on their safety and well-being.
6. Future researchers may expand on the findings of this study by conducting additional research to identify new competencies and areas for improvement in respiratory therapy practice.

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