



YOUR LUNG HEALTH

&

THE ROLE OF THE
RESPIRATORY THERAPIST

*A seminar presented by the
American Association for Respiratory Care*

OVERVIEW

The American Association for Respiratory Care has launched a national campaign to educate high school students on the role of the respiratory therapist and the importance of maintaining lung health. A pilot seminar was conducted at Irving (Texas) High School to establish a format to be followed nationwide. Now we are calling on our army of respiratory therapists across the country to expand this message to high schools in every region of the United States.

The three main goals of this campaign are:

- To educate the students about the profession for those who might consider pursuing respiratory therapy as a career.
- To educate the students about CPR in the event they are confronted with an emergency situation.
- To provide information about the two main lung diseases, asthma and COPD, the signs and symptoms of those disease and what can be done to help those with these diseases. Whereas asthma education can benefit the students directly, the COPD message may motivate them to avoid smoking as well as to become a key influence in helping parents to quit.

The following information will describe how to organize and arrange an educational seminar at a high school in your area. The enclosed CD-Rom shows the pilot program at Irving High School and can be used as a template for presentations across the country.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY HIGH SCHOOL

This is a key step that will save you a lot of time, if done properly. First make a list of five high schools in your area that have good reputations. Experience has shown that smaller to middle sized high schools are better targets than overcrowded schools. In general, private schools usually respond quicker and are more helpful than large public schools.

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY CONTACTS AT THE SCHOOLS

There are usually three contacts you will want to identify:

1. Assistant principal who coordinates educational events
2. Health teachers
3. School nurse.

A phone call to the front office administrative assistant should help in acquiring these names. Be certain to ask for their phone extensions and e-mail addresses.

STEP THREE: SEND LETTER

Send a letter to each contact at all five schools that explains the program and requests a date for the presentation. We recommend that you send the letter via U.S. mail and e-mail. Please include your cell phone number in the event they call you back.

(An example letter is included on the following pages.)

STEP FOUR: PHONE FOLLOW-UP

In general, you can start by calling the assistant principal. The best times to call are:

- Early, before school starts
- An hour after school starts
- An hour after school ends

After two phone calls, if you are not able to reach the assistant principal, then try contacting the health teachers and school nurse. It has been our experience that most administrators or teachers will not take the initiative to return phone calls or e-mails in a timely fashion. They are very busy. Don't be offended by this. It is usually because they are too busy to look at the opportunity you are offering. Once they understand it, they will usually become an active participant in arranging the presentation. Once you make the contact and generate the interest, it will get easier. Persistent and repeated calls will usually motivate them to return a call. Once you do speak with the person who will help arrange the seminar, make certain to request their cell phone number. This will be of great help.

In your initial discussions with the school administrator or teacher, if you believe that the school is very unorganized or completely disinterested, cross them off your list and move onto the next school. There is no point in becoming frustrated or wasting your time with unorganized schools. You are providing a free public service that will benefit their students and school. You deserve their attention and polite reply.

STEP FIVE: ARRANGING THE SEMINAR

The key to scheduling a seminar is:

- A. Fitting into the schedule of the school. If you can make the presentation during the time allotted to a health class, the health teachers will usually be very receptive. In some cases, they will pull all of the students from their health classes into the auditorium or gymnasium so you can make one presentation to all. That is their decision, but can be suggested as an idea that has worked at other schools. Remember, the key is to fit into their schedule.

- B. Finding health teachers and administrators who are excited about the opportunity. Once you have identified a motivated partner, that person will usually take care of all the internal hurdles and red tape to arrange for the seminar.
- C. Seminars will usually run the length of the class time allotted. You may be asked to make your presentation two or three times during the targeted day to various classes.

STEP SIX: THE SEMINAR

Seminars can be conducted right in the classroom or in the high school gym or auditorium depending on the size of the student audience. This will be determined by the high school based on how many students they want to reach.

Equipment/Tools Needed

- Laptop computer with PowerPoint Presentation
- Intubation dummy
- CPR dummy
- Stethoscope
- Labcoat
- Manual Ventilator
- Esophagus Flashlight

Auditorium/Gymnasium Presentation

If the school wants to conduct the seminar in the auditorium, ask your contact to put you in touch with the technical person or auditorium manager for help:

- Setting up the stage
- Hooking in your laptop for the PowerPoint Presentation
- Lighting the event
- Coordinating the sound

Pre-Presentation Setup

If you can get into the space 30 minutes before the presentation to work with the technical person to set it up, that will help the overall look of your presentation.

In the auditorium, here is the suggested arrangement:

- Podium with microphone set up to left where you can direct your PowerPoint presentation (you may need to ask a teacher to operate the computer to advance slides while you address the audience).
- Large screen in middle of the stage to project presentation.
- Table in the middle of the stage where you can demonstrate CPR and intubation procedures.
- Work with the health teacher to identify two students who can participate in the presentation for the CPR and intubation portions. The schools usually have all of the students sign a release form. Confirm that the students selected have done this.

Classroom

If you conduct the seminar in the classroom, you will need to:

1. Ask the teacher if the room is set up to do a PowerPoint presentation. Many schools across the United States are now set up with this resource.
2. If you can not project the PowerPoint presentation, we suggest reading it from your computer.
3. Use the same approach for the demonstrations, except in the classroom you can bring a number of students up to help with the intubation and CPR.
4. Encourage questions right from the start to make your presentation as interactive as possible. The sooner the students get involved with the presentation, the more interest you will garner.

SEMINAR AGENDA

Introduction:

- Hello, my name is RT Name. I am a registered respiratory therapist at hospital name and am here today for the American Association for Respiratory Care to talk to you about the role of the respiratory therapist and the importance of maintaining lung health.
- I will share with you information about my profession that I hope you will find interesting and educational. If you have questions along the way, just raise your hand and I will do the best we can to answer you.

I. PowerPoint Presentation (CD-Rom)

Slide 1. What is a respiratory therapist?

Slide 2: *What is a Respiratory Therapist?*

- ◆Healthcare professional
- ◆Diagnosis, treat, and educate patients
- ◆Work in
- ◆Hospitals
- ◆Emergency rooms
- ◆Clinics
- ◆Homecare
- ◆Education
- ◆Private enterprise
- ◆Research

Slide 3: *How do they assess and diagnose?*

- ◆ Pulmonary function testing
- ◆ Blood gases
- ◆ Sleep studies
- ◆ Chest X-ray
- ◆ Listening to the lungs

Slide 4: *How do they treat?*

- ◆ Use of sophisticated devices that administer oxygen or assist in breathing
- ◆ Mechanical ventilators
- ◆ Administer medicine that is inhaled
- ◆ Maintaining an airway

Slide 5: *Demographics*

- ◆ 60 percent female and 40 percent male
- ◆ Mean age is 44
- ◆ Baby boomers will demand the services of the RT
- ◆ Asthma and COPD on the rise

Slide 6: *Comfortable in*

- ◆ General sciences (biology, physics, chemistry)
- ◆ Able to interact well with others
- ◆ Deal with sick patients
- ◆ Enjoys technical types of things
- ◆ Not afraid of a fast pace

Slide 7: *Schooling*

- ◆ 2 years Associate's
- ◆ 4 year Bachelor's

Slide 8: *Typical Day*

- ◆ Medicinal aerosol delivery
- ◆ Assessing patients
- ◆ Educating
- ◆ Managing mechanical ventilators
- ◆ CPR
- ◆ Diagnostic testing
- ◆ Rounding with doctors and others to develop care plans

Slide 9: *Best and worst*

- ◆ Being part of making someone well
- ◆ Making a difference
- ◆ Furthering patient care and science
- ◆ 24/7 and 7 days a week
- ◆ Stressful situations

Slide 10: *What does an RT make?*

- ◆ Depends on where you live
- ◆ New grads \$20/hour (was \$16/hour 5 years ago) (24 percent increase)
- ◆ On the job for a few years \$27/hour (was \$19.50/hour 5 years ago) (38 percent increase)
- ◆ RNs make \$27/hour

Slide 11: *COPD*

- ◆ 4th leading cause of death
- ◆ Largely caused by cigarette smoking
- ◆ Can be diagnosed early and treated early
- ◆ Best preventative advice: DO NOT SMOKE

Slide 12: *Asthma*

- ◆ Most common chronic disease of childhood
- ◆ 22 million asthmatics
- ◆ Increasing frequency
- ◆ Can be managed with proper management and education

II. CPR Demonstration (Bring pre-selected student up to help)

- What do you do if a patient stops breathing and he/she has no pulse?
Demonstrate CPR with student's assistance.

III. Intubation Demonstration (Bring student up to help)

- What happens if someone suffers a respiratory attack, has shortness of breath or can't breathe at all?
Demonstrate intubation with student's assistance.

IV. Keeping Your Lungs Healthy

- **Asthma:** How many students have asthma? Ask one to tell the other students what it is like to have asthma – signs, symptoms, remedies.
 - Then, explain asthma.

- **COPD**: How many students have parents who smoke or have smoked? Do they notice the cough or wheezing?
 - Then, explain COPD.
 - Talk about how tobacco companies are trying to hook smokers young, so they have them for life.
 - How difficult it is to quit smoking because of the ammonia added to cigarettes that makes them even more addictive.

V. Becoming an RT

- If any of you are interested in finding out more about this profession, you can go to our Web site www.AARC.org and look for the *Becoming and RT* link.

VI. Q&A

- If there is still time, you can open it up to additional Q&A.
- When ending the program, be sure to publicly thank the people at the school who helped arrange the seminar.

LOCAL MEDIA

Below is a press release template you can adjust to announce your seminar. The media that will be most interested are the local weekly newspapers. In addition, you can send the press release to the health editors at the daily newspapers. You can try pitching the local television stations as well, contacting the health producer or reporter.

- Identify the local print publications in the area and ask for the name and e-mail address of the editor to send a press release about a health story taking place in the area. E-mail is usually the most effective way of communicating with the media. Some may only accept faxes.
- For daily newspapers, ask for the name of the health editor. Try to get in contact with this person to see if you can e-mail them the press release. If you do talk with them, let them know you will be sending the press release, but tell them about the seminar and the importance of educating students about the importance of maintaining lung health.
- At television stations, request the name of the health producer or reporter. Let them know you will be doing a demonstration with an intubation dummy and will be assisted by a student. This provides them with a good visual, which is their priority when considering stories.



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STUDENTS AT NAME HIGH SCHOOL TO SAVE DUMMY’S LIFE

YOUR CITY (Month, date, year [7 days before seminar]) – You can’t be a dummy when faced with the crisis of having to save a person’s life using CPR or intubation. But you can use a dummy to learn these procedures.

That’s what students at Name High School (address) will find out on day, month, date at time when the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) conducts a seminar to educate them about these life-saving procedures. The seminar is part of a national campaign to educate high school students across the country about lung disease and the role of respiratory therapists in maintaining lung health.

Respiratory therapist Presenting RTs Name will lead the educational presentation, describing how respiratory therapists quickly attend to patients gasping for air the second they arrive in the emergency room. It is the respiratory therapist’s job to provide treatment and care to those patients suffering a severe attack of asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).

“When a patient is struggling to breathe and rushed into the emergency room, it is the job of the respiratory therapist to treat them immediately – basically to save that person’s life,” said RTs Last Name, who has been a respiratory therapist for xx years and is Hospital Affiliation. “To demonstrate the procedure, we use a special mannequin, or dummy, and show the students how we may start with an oxygen mask, but sometimes will need to insert a tube down the patient’s throat to be sure they can breathe again. This procedure is called intubation and usually gets their attention.”

Besides demonstrating intubation, RTs Last Name will have students assist him or her on another emergency situation respiratory therapists face quite often – cardio pulmonary resuscitation or CPR. RTs Last Name will show the students how quickly he or she must make a physical assessment, hook the patient up to a cardiac monitor, check the patient’s oxygen saturation and consider other life-saving procedures.

In the course of the presentation, RTs Last Name will highlight how the lungs function, the importance of avoiding smoke or smoke-filled air and what happens when the airways become blocked or constricted because of an asthma attack or COPD exacerbation (severe attack).

“Besides informing students about a profession they may want to consider pursuing, this seminar will educate the kids about the lungs and how they function,” said Tom Kallstrom, associate executive director of the American Association for Respiratory Care. “This will vividly show what happens when a person suffers an asthma attack and just how dangerous it can be if they don’t have that rescue inhaler available. This is an important message for the teachers as well. Everyone needs to understand that asthma is not something to be dismissed.”

In addition, the AARC wants to reach those students who smoke or are considering smoking. RTs Last Name will show what happens to the lungs of a smoker as they develop COPD, which is better known as chronic bronchitis or emphysema.

“So many of the students think they can just quit smoking later, but it is an addiction on a par with heroin, very difficult to stop,” said Kallstrom, who has been a respiratory therapist for 30 years. “We hope this seminar will dissuade students from smoking tobacco.”

As a public service, the AARC will present this seminar at high schools across the country over the next two years, hoping to reach 10,000 students in the schools and a much larger audience through the news media. The goal is to make students and the general public aware that they have an opportunity to keep their lungs healthy and improve their chances of living a longer, healthier life.

About the AARC

The American Association for Respiratory Care, headquartered in Dallas, is a professional association of respiratory therapists that focuses primarily on respiratory therapy education and research. The organization's goals are to ensure that respiratory patients receive safe and effective care from qualified professionals as well as supporting respiratory health care providers. The association continues to advocate on behalf of pulmonary patients for appropriate access to respiratory services provided by qualified professionals. Further information about the AARC and how to become a respiratory therapist is available at www.aarc.org.

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