



*The evolving H1N1 influenza pandemic demonstrates that we must prepare for unforeseen circumstances and identify strategies by which we can assure the public that the NSCRT regulatory mandate can be met during anticipated human resource challenges. This document outlines our priorities, communication plan, emergency operational team, and ethical statements regarding Respiratory Therapists duty to provide care.*

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### *NSCRT Roles and Responsibilities*

The NSCRT regulatory mandate must be met during a pandemic emergency. The College has limited resources and will prioritize activities so as to insure critical activities are addressed first.

1. Maintain a method to register qualified professionals. Policies for temporary registration of out of province RRTs and retired RTs to allow them to return to active practice are in place to allow for potential human resource challenges. *(Appendix attached)*
  2. Provide effective communication of relevant information to the members. This will primarily be done through the NSCRT website.
  3. Advise on regulatory / standards of practice issues. The College will act as a liaison between government, respiratory therapists and employers to ensure respiratory therapists are competent and qualified to provide safe and effective care.
  4. Deal with disciplinary matters as they present themselves. The College's ability to respond to discipline issues may be limited during a pandemic emergency.
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### *Communication Plan*



## *Nova Scotia College of Respiratory Therapists    Pandemic Plan*

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The official spokesperson for the NSCRT is the President. Any public statements from the College will be from the President or her/his designate.

The NSCRT will make every effort to communicate to our members current pandemic information.

The **NSCRT website** will be the primary communication tool so members are advised to visit the site for updates. There is a H1N1 tab currently on the website that contains links to information updates, CSRT communication, position statements, etc. This will be updated when new information is available.

**Urgent information** will be communicated to each member **via email** and the provincial Respiratory Managers will be asked to print the information and post in their departments in case email addresses are not up to date.

In the event that our webmaster is not able to provide ongoing support to the website, we will use email as our primary communication tool.

We will provide a **Question and Answer** tab on the website to post questions that come to the College related to H1N1 and the answers so all members benefit from the dialogue.

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### ***Duty to Provide Care***

The Nova Scotia College of Respiratory Therapists recognizes that respiratory therapists are healthcare professionals responsible to provide clients with safe, competent and ethical care, including during an emergency such as a pandemic.

During influenza pandemic RTs face a disproportionate risk of exposure to the virus compared to the general public and non professionals. The anticipated increase in demand for critical healthcare services will place additional burden on limited RT staff resources. The professional responsibility and risk of exposure may create conflict for RTs as they attempt to balance their duty to provide care with the need to protect themselves and their families. The NSCRT wants to provide a framework by which RTs will be guided through ethical decision making.

While RTs will be expected to provide care to clients who are infected, they are not expected to place themselves at unnecessary risk to do so.

- RTs are encouraged to protect themselves by receiving the H1N1 vaccine.



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- They should always perform their duties within the Standards of Practice for Respiratory Therapists and in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- RTs should ensure that all precautionary measures are in place and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment is utilized when entering situations that potentially expose themselves to risk of infection.

Individual RTs may find themselves in personal situations that complicate their professional and ethical responsibilities. They may have other responsibilities to children, parents, ill spouses, for example; with increased demands that are precipitated by the influenza pandemic. These individual situations may outweigh their professional duty to provide care. RTs must use their skills, knowledge and professional judgement to make ethical decisions that balance the needs of their families and the needs of the public. If an RT chooses to refuse work due to responsibilities at home they *must* inform their employer why they are refusing, the decision-making process used to come to this decision and provide the employer reasonable time to find a replacement.

The needs for respiratory care during a pandemic influenza outbreak may be different than traditional respiratory care needs within an institution. For example: research, patient education on chronic disease management, and elective surgeries may be suspended during an influenza pandemic. RTs who work in these areas may be called upon to practice in acute care or intensive care. RTs must practice within their *individual scope of competency* and inform their employer of any competency limits. Employers should be prepared to provide education and training to upgrade competencies of RTs that may be called upon to perform duties outside of their individual scope during a pandemic. RT's and employers should work together so as to ensure optimum utilization of RT staff.

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### *Operational Emergency Team*

The NSCRT Board governs the College and is charged with the responsibility to manage its affairs. The duties and authority of each member of the Board are identified in the position descriptions adopted by the Board. Day to day operational duties and regulatory duties are delegated to the Registrar and to employees of Pathfinder Group. The NSCRT Board, the Registrar and Pathfinder Group form the Operational Team for the College. In the event that a member of the College's operational team is not able to perform their respective duties alternate members are identified to fulfill the authority and responsibility of that member as follows:



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**President:** The highest level of authority is vested in the position of the President. In the event that the President temporarily cannot fulfill her/his responsibilities the President's designate will assume the authority and responsibilities. As per the role descriptions adopted by the Board the President Elect or Past President (depending on the year) are the designated positions to assume the Presidents role.

**Treasurer:** The treasurer is vested with the authority and responsibility to oversee the financial operations of the College. The day to day financial activities of the College are delegated to Pathfinder and fulfilled by the accountant. In the event the Treasurer is temporarily unable to fulfill her/his responsibilities another officer of the Board will be appointed by the President or her/his designate to assume these responsibilities.

**Registrar:** The Registrar is vested with the authority and responsibility to perform the regulatory duties of the College. These duties are registration, registration renewal, professional practice and professional conduct advise and discipline. Administrative support for these functions is delegated to Pathfinder. In the event that the Registrar temporarily cannot fulfill her/his responsibilities the President or her/his designate will, in consultation with available members of the Board of the College, assign these responsibilities to Board members who chair or serve on the relevant statutory committee.

**Pathfinder:** In the event that Pathfinder Group temporarily cannot provide the current level of support to the College the operational challenges will be reported immediately to the Registrar. The Registrar will collaborate with Pathfinder to ensure that critical functions can continue. Critical functions are identified as those functions that directly relate to the regulatory mandate of the College such as public and member access, maintenance of registration records, receipt of registration applications particularly if emergency registration is required, and web site maintenance.

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## **Appendix**

April 30, 2009

### **NSCRT Policy**

#### **Temporary Registration of Canadian Out-of-Province**

#### **Respiratory Therapists Applying to Assist in Emergency Situations**

In light of the current Swine Influenza outbreak internationally, and in consideration of confirmed cases of Swine Influenza in Nova Scotia; the NSCRT Board recognizes it would be prudent to consider a mechanism for registration of out-of-province applicants from other jurisdictions who are willing to assist with an emergency or health crisis in Nova Scotia.

Currently, Canadian out-of-province Respiratory Therapists may be registered in Nova Scotia provided they meet the criteria for registration:

- ⇒ Hold an active practicing license in good standing issued by a Canadian regulatory body outside of Nova Scotia, or
- ⇒ be a registered member of the CSRT and practicing in an unregulated jurisdiction, and
- ⇒ provide evidence of practicing the profession within that jurisdiction for a minimum of 1500 hours within the previous four years, and
- ⇒ be fluent in written and spoken English or French

The NSCRT Board authorizes the Registrar to issue a temporary license and to waive the application and registration fees for 60 days for a Canadian Respiratory Therapist applicant who is applying for an active practicing license for the purpose of assisting with a declared emergency situation or health crisis in



Nova Scotia. Should the situation extend beyond 60 days the Registrar is authorized to extend the temporary license another 30 days. Should the out-of-province member wish to remain in Nova Scotia beyond the crisis the Registrar may require the member to pay the full fees at that time.

November 12, 2009

## **NSCRT Policy**

### **Temporary Registration of Retired**

### **Respiratory Therapists Applying to Assist in Emergency Situations**

In light of the current H1N1 Influenza outbreak internationally, and in consideration of confirmed cases of H1N1 Influenza in Nova Scotia; the NSCRT Board recognizes it would be prudent to consider a mechanism for temporary registration of retired respiratory therapists who are willing to assist with an emergency or health crisis in Nova Scotia.

The NSCRT Board authorizes the Registrar to issue a temporary license and to waive the application and registration fees for 60 days for a retired respiratory therapist applicant who is applying for an active practicing license for the purpose of assisting in the event that there are critical staff shortages in a District Health Authority or a private company under the following criteria:

- The applicant's licence to practice has not been suspended due to a disciplinary process.
- The applicant has held a licence to practice and was in active clinical practice within the past 5 years.

Applicants who do not meet the above criteria may be considered for a temporary licence with conditions or restrictions under the following criteria:

- The employer has identified a restricted role under which they can practice within the institution.
- The applicant demonstrates to the employer they possess the competency to fulfill the defined role to the employer
- The applicant and employer agree to specific skills upgrade and will provide evidence to the College that the identified skills can be obtained within the institution.



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