

30TH ANNIVERSARY SURVEY OF RPSGTs SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



THE BOARD OF REGISTERED POLYSOMNOGRAPHIC TECHNOLOGISTS



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METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by the BRPT online as a 53-question survey with a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. Invitations to participate were extended to RPSGTs only. The survey was made available on August 25, 2009 and delivered to 8,074 RPSGTs via email (Note: It is possible that, in a limited number of instances, the survey was forwarded to a non-registered tech; however, the overwhelming majority of respondents self-identified as RPSGTs.). The survey was closed on September 10, 2009. There were 967 responses, a solid 12% response rate, projectable to the universe of RPSGTs. Not all respondents answered all questions, although most questions had a 90% response rate.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this study were:

- To learn more about day-to-day working lives of RPSGTs.
- To measure attitudes and perceptions about the RPSGT examination.
- Where possible, to detect any differences in responses in this survey compared to the previous study conducted in 2007.
- To measure interest in other areas.

TOP-LINE FINDINGS

1. 93% of those who responded to the survey hold the RPSGT credential.
2. More than 90% of the RPSGTs who responded were very satisfied or satisfied with the RPSGT credential. That figure has remained steady since 2007. Only 9% of RPSGTs were not satisfied with the credential.
3. 72% of respondents passed the exam the first time. 15% passed the second time, and another 10% passed after taking the exam more than twice.
4. 38% of those surveyed described themselves as general sleep technologists, but another 31% described themselves as sleep technologists with management responsibilities.
5. About 60% worked in accredited facilities, a 20% increase from the 2007 survey.
6. Although the majority of RPSGTs continue to work with sleep techs who are not credentialed in sleep, this percentage decreased, from 85% to 78%.
7. The majority of respondents (72%) felt that sufficient educational materials existed to prepare for the RPSGT exam, although support was high for additional online practice exams (56%), online study options or discussion boards (46%), prep courses or seminars (57%), and structured on-the-job training programs (50%).
8. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of respondents who took the 18-month pathway to become eligible for certification, although it remained the most popular pathway at 59%.
9. 50% of respondents continue to believe there is a demand for an advanced credential, a 6% drop from the 2007 survey. The percentage of those who disagree, however, has also decreased, from 24% to 22%. A general advanced credential, an advanced scoring credential, and a sleep educator credential generated the most interest. Respondents were least interested in an advanced geriatrics or management credential.
10. Popular professional publications include ADVANCE for Respiratory Care (64%), Sleep Review (63%), A2Zzz (47%), BRPT Insider (43%), Focus Journal (39%) and the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine (29%).
11. Demand for community education materials, physician education materials, and more online practice exams remains high. There is also significant demand for an on-the-job training manual for supervisors on how to train entry-level sleep techs.
12. Regional sleep meetings were the most attended professional conferences (56%), followed by CEC-provided programs in their own facility (37%), AAST (35%), AASM (25%), regional respiratory meetings (18%), APSS (15%), BRPT Symposium (13%) and FOCUS (13%).
13. Respondents are very concerned with the perception that the field is not a distinct allied health profession. 64% felt that this misperception by legislators was a significant threat to the field; 62% felt this misperception by other health care providers was a significant threat. Home and portable monitoring was also seen as a significant threat by 42% of respondents.
14. 3% of respondents indicated that they also hold either the CRT-SDS or RRT-SDS licensure.
15. Despite the slow economy, 50% of respondents feel that RPSGTs are in great demand due to a shortage of sleep techs. 49% feel that the job market varies by area but is good in their region; 37% believed the job market varies by area and is not good in their region.



16. Regarding social media, although 41% of respondents use Facebook in their personal lives, only 11% use it for professional purposes, and 48% do not use it at all. LinkedIn, MySpace and Twitter are used by less than 2% of respondents in any professional capacity. 24% of respondents participate in professional online discussion groups or bulletin boards. 18% percent read or post on sleep-related blogs, most often BinarySleep.com (which several respondents rated highly) and Sleep.com.

6. Many respondents hold professional memberships, in addition to their RPSGT credential, including:
 - a. AAST (45%)
 - b. AASM (20%)
 - c. AARC (15%)
7. Respondents read the following publications:
 - a. Advance (64%)
 - b. Sleep Review (63%)
 - c. A2Zzz (47%)
 - d. BRPT Insider Newsletter (43%)
 - e. Focus (39%)
 - f. Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine (29%)
 - g. AARC Times (16%)

BRPT SURVEY RESULTS

A DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

1. There were 967 responses; RPSGTs made up 94% of respondents, while only 2% were sleep techs without the RPSGT credential.
2. Responses were from all 50 states, plus seven countries (mainly Canada, Australia and Japan). The largest concentrations of respondents were in Ohio (6%), Florida (5%), Texas (5%), Tennessee, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana (4% each).
3. The field is getting older. Only 12% of respondents were under 30, compared with 20% in 2007. A quarter of respondents were between 30-39, down from a third in 2007; 30% were between 40-49, the same as in 2007; another third were over the age of 50, compared with just 17% in 2007.
4. Consistent with this, respondents have more experience in the sleep field. Only 10% have been in the sleep field less than 2 years, compared to 18% in 2007. 28% have been sleep techs for 3-5 years, compared with 38% in 2007. 30% have been sleep techs for 6-10 years, roughly the same as in 2007, while the number of sleep techs with 11-20 years in the field has jumped from 12% to 22%; 10% of sleep techs have more than 20 years of experience.
5. The field is slightly more educated. Although 32% of respondents have less than two years of college (the same percentage as 2007), 34% have an Associate's degree (a 2% increase), and 27% have a Bachelor's degree (a 4% increase).
 - a. 32% of respondents also hold RRT or CRT licensure, 3% of whom also hold CRT-SDS or RRTSDS licensure.
 - b. 5% also hold R. EEG T., R. EP T., or CNIM licensure.
 - c. 4% also hold an RN or LPN licensure.

INSIGHTS INTO THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

1. The majority of respondents (37%) are general sleep technologists, an additional 31% are sleep technologists with management responsibilities and another 13% are scoring specialists. These numbers differ only slightly from 2007, when 38% described themselves as general sleep technologists, 29% described themselves as sleep technologists with management responsibilities, and 17% were scoring specialists.
2. In a typical work week, respondents spent the most time scoring sleep studies (55%) and performing nocturnal sleep studies (48%). These percentages were down slightly from 2007, when 60% of respondents reported spending a significant amount of time scoring and 56% monitoring studies. Other tasks included performing PAP/02 Titration (33%), and supervising or management duties (28% each, compared to 32% in 2007).
3. The majority of respondents continue to work in AASM-accredited facilities (60%, up from 54% in 2007). The percentage of respondents working in non-accredited facilities dropped from 40% to 28%, while 8% work in facilities with other accreditation, compared to 6% in 2007.
4. 39% of respondents work at universities or university hospitals, 21% work at non-university hospitals, 20% work at privately funded sleep facilities, and 16% work at a general sleep disorders facility. These numbers are very similar to 2007 responses.
5. Although the majority of RPSGTs continue to work with sleep techs who are not credentialed, that number continues to decrease, from 94% in 2004 to 85% in 2007 to 78% now. Many respondents (44%) cited ineligibility as the reason their coworkers were not yet certified.



6. 50% of respondents (up from 34% in 2007) feel that RPSGTs are in great demand and do not believe the market for sleep techs is saturated. 49% feel that the job market varies by area but is good in their region; 37% believe the job market varies by area and is not good in their region.
7. A majority of respondents believe that the perception by legislators (64%) and other health professionals (62%) that the sleep field is not a distinct allied health profession is a significant threat to the field. (Note: Earlier surveys did not ask about these threats.) Home and portable monitoring was also seen as a significant threat by 42% of respondents. The percentage of respondents who feel that the hiring of non-registered sleep techs is a significant threat to the profession has increased from 28% to 35%. Concern about home and portable monitoring has grown from 20% to 42%, and concern with non-healthcare management takeovers has grown from 16% to 42%. However, it is important to note that in previous surveys, respondents were asked to choose one response, while in this year's survey they were asked to rate each threat in terms of how serious they felt it was.
3. 72% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "sufficient education/training/preparation options exist to adequately prepare candidates for the RPSGT examination." This percentage continues to grow, up from 41% in 2004 and 63% in 2007.

VIEWS ON THE RPSGT CREDENTIAL

1. Satisfaction with the current RPSGT credential remains at 2007 levels, with more than 90% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied.
2. Overall, respondents found the RPSGT credential very useful. In particular, they found it "very" or "somewhat useful" for:
 - a. Providing credibility/symbol of knowledge in the field (92%)
 - b. Setting standards of ethics and conduct (89%)
 - c. Providing job security (89%)
 - d. Meeting requirements for AASM accreditation (89%)
 - e. Providing job advancement opportunities (82%)
 - f. Meeting state/local current or possible regulations (80%)
 - g. Meeting Medicare and other payer requirements (79%)
3. Of those respondents who are certified, 50% have been certified for between 1-5 years, up from 30% in 2007; only 17% have been certified for less than a year, down from 40% in 2007. Another 17% have been certified more than 5 years, up 5% since 2007.
4. The majority (59%) took the 18-month pathway to become eligible for certification. However, this is down 9% from the previous survey. 33% had 6 months on-the-job training as a certified health professional (up 4% from 2007). Percentages for CAAHEP-approved programs doubled but still only amounted to 2% and 5% for the add-on and stand-alone programs, respectively.
5. Opinions on requiring 18-month candidates to also complete a structured training program vary: 38% agree or strongly agree, 29% are neutral, and 33% disagree or strongly disagree.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE RPSGT EXAM

1. This year's survey did not explicitly ask respondents if they had taken the RPSGT exam, but since the survey sample was composed almost entirely of RPSGTs or potential RPSGTs, it is safe to assume that a similar percentage have taken the RPSGT exam. 72% of respondents told us they passed the exam the first time, a 7% increase from the 2007 survey. 15% passed the second time, down only 4% from 2007. As in 2007, 10% of respondents had taken the exam more than twice; only about 2% have taken the exam more than twice without passing yet. This year's survey did not ask those who have not passed if they plan to retake the exam.
2. Half of respondents describe the RPSGT exam as "difficult but fair," compared to 68% in the previous survey. However another 24% feel the exam is fair, while an equal number feel it was too easy (10%) or too difficult (10%).