

Critical thinking in respiratory care practice: a qualitative research study.

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Critical Thinking in Respiratory Care Practice: A Qualitative Research Study

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Article

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Recent publications indicate that critical thinking should be an integral part of respiratory care education. However, we know very little about critical thinking in the context of respiratory care. The critical thinking abilities and decision-making characteristics of practicing respiratory therapists have not been studied.

PURPOSE: Identify and describe the critical thinking skills and traits of respiratory therapists, using a qualitative, descriptive research methodology.

METHODS: Critical thinking was defined as the combination of logical reasoning, problem-solving, and reflection. The sample was selected through nominations of experts, using reputational-case selection. The research involved observations of 18 registered respiratory therapists, followed by in-depth interviews. Data were collected over a 1-year period and there were 125 hours of observation and 36 hours of interview. The observations were the basis for identifying and describing context-bound situations that require critical thinking, as well as the essential skills and related traits.

RESULTS: The data set consists of over 600 single-spaced pages of interview transcripts and participant-observation field notes, in addition to 36 audio tapes. Field notes and interview transcripts were continuously analyzed throughout the study, using the constant-comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss.

CONCLUSIONS: The findings suggest that critical thinking in respiratory care practice involves the abilities to prioritize, anticipate, troubleshoot, communicate, negotiate, reflect, and make decisions.

critical thinking

respiratory care

Footnotes

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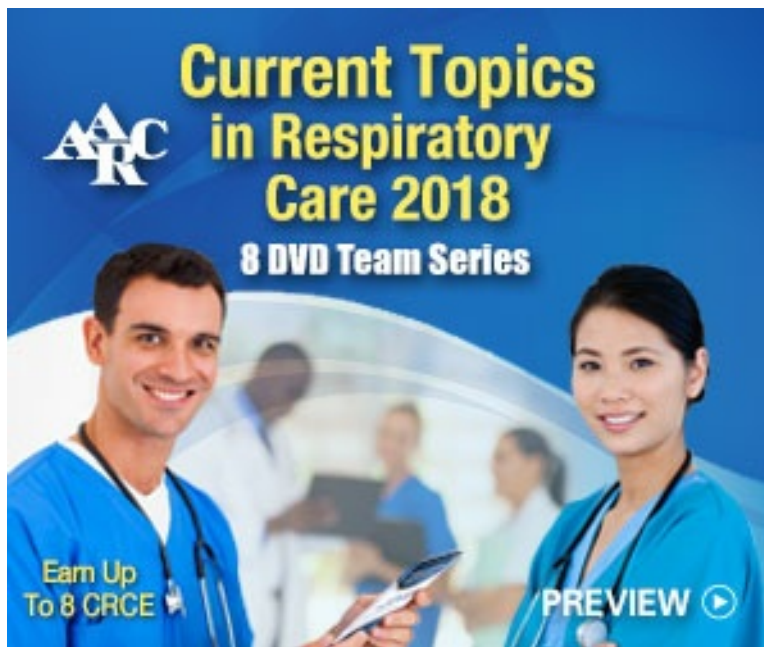
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