Radiation Therapy Competencies

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Agenda

- What does it mean to become and remain competent?
- Maintenance of Certification for RTT's
- Competency Opportunities
- Why are competencies important in radiation therapy
- Developing a competency program
- Panelists

Competence

- Ability to perform a job properly
- Combination of knowledge, skills and behavior used to perform a defined task
- Maintenance of ARRT registration AND ongoing acquisition of necessary skills

Certification

- Initial
  - Shows past accomplishments
  - Snapshot in time
- Maintenance
  - Purpose:
    - To sustain a level of expertise
    - Remain aware of changes and advances in radiation therapy practice

Maintaining Certification

- Documents ongoing qualification and competence
- Patients expect and deserve healthcare providers who remain competent
- Technology advancements are evolving at an increasingly rapid rate
  - Old expectation:
    - "once certified, forever qualified"
  - New expectation
    - "Once certified forever growing, learning and developing in the profession"

Maintaining Certification

- To maintain certification, ARRT-registered radiation therapists are required to complete 24 hours of continuing education in approved activities every 2 years
  - Directed readings
  - Higher education
  - Society Meetings (RTOW, ASRT, ASTRO, etc)
ARRT Continuing Qualification Requirements

- CQR
- Purpose:
  - Identify and remediate where knowledge and skills may not meet entry-level qualification standards
  - Certifications earned post 1/1/11
  - 10 year certification – complete CQR in final 3 years of term
  - Opportunity to demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and skills
- 3 components:
  - Professional profile:
    - Achievements related to education, work, special skills and professional development
    - Sustains RTT's maintained qualification
  - Self-assessment process:
    - Not a test – Online skills assessment
    - Evaluates strengths and weaknesses in knowledge and skills
    - Identifies targeted learning opportunities
  - Completing identified CE activities
  
https://www.arrt.org/Registration/CQR

Competency Opportunities

- Workplace specific competencies
  - In addition to CQR
  - In-person assessment
  - Specific to technology/workflows/practices at site
  - Program developed by site
  - Opportunity for staff to document knowledge
- Purpose:
  - Sustain a level of expertise
  - Remain aware of change and advances in radiation therapy

Competency Opportunities

- New staff
- Ongoing for current staff
- New technology/procedures/software

Workplace Specific Competencies

- Considerations
  - Skills needed to operate equipment may not have been taught during initial training/education
  - Time constraints
    - Revenue generating vs non-revenue generating activities
  - Cost of incompetence

Benefits

- Continual professional development
- Gain confidence
- Gain personal insight to changes in radiation oncology
- Validate and advance knowledge and skills
- Re-energize passion and enjoyment of career

New Equipment & Technology

- Need to ensure current RTT's are competent on new technology/procedure prior to implementation
  - New treatment machine
  - New CT Sim
  - New Software
  - Gating
  - 4D CT
  - SBRT
  - Total Body
  - IGRT (CBCT, CT on rails, etc.)
Partner with Vendor
- Ensure materials are developed and available prior to implementation
- Vendor has a responsibility to ensure proper training

Goal
- Competent therapists
  - Therapists who are thoroughly and completely trained on equipment/procedures
  - Prepared to provide safe care
  - Prepared to provide quality care
  - Prepared to provide the care patients deserve

Key Points
- Competency assessment = continuing education, not a test!
- Continuing education must be an ongoing process, especially in radiation therapy
- Maintaining and enhancing competency is inherent in the radiation therapy professional performance standards
- In-person assessment is different than online assessment

Why
- Safety
- Documentation that staff are competent
- Ongoing education
- Promotes professionalism
- Enhance perception of professionalism by lifelong learning
- Sets workplace standards
- Provides opportunity for staff to grow

Develop a Program
- Identify skills to be assessed
  - New Staff
  - Ongoing
  - New technology/software
- Frequency
- Identify a proctor
- Promote peer to peer assessment
- Clearly identify the process and educate all staff
- Encourage ongoing education, specifically related to radiation therapy

Radiation Therapist Competencies
RTOW Spring Meeting 2013
What's Involved?
- Peer to Peer review
- Patients Point of View
- Mistakes or Failed Comps?

How Often are Competencies Performed?
- Assessments are performed annually per departmental policy
- Some assessments are not applicable for staff.

Types of Competencies
- Machine Warm up
- CT Simulations
- Treatment & Confirmation Simulations

Treatment Competencies
- CT on Rails with Confirmation Simulation
- Siemens Tx + Confirmation Simulation with IGRT
- Elekta Infinity Tx + Confirmation Simulation & IGRT
- Tomotherapy Tx + Confirmation Simulation
- Emergency Sim & Treat on Linac

CT Simulation Competencies
- IV Contrast
- Multiple Iso-centers
- Craniospinal
- 4D, Gating / Breast Simulation
- TBI

Who Proctors the Annual Competencies?
- Tiered responsibility - Lead therapists proctor most competencies
- Peer Assessment
- Physics Assessment
- Chief Therapist Involvement
New Equipment Competencies

- Work together with vendor representatives to ensure successful implementation and training
- Applications trainers will develop, implement & provide checklists for post-assessment competency of the Radiation Therapists’ skills
- Follow-up Meetings are Scheduled

Personal Experience

- Build a culture where ongoing peer review is supported
- Encourage staff to keep up to date on competencies
- Take advantage of on-site vendor training with new emerging treatment modalities
- Ask questions, don’t be afraid to learn.
- Request checklists from applications trainers to master required expectations
- Therapist rotations are important

Competencies

Columbia St. Mary’s
Radiation St. Mary’s
Spring RTOW 2013

Development of Competencies

- The Joint Commission
  - The very beginning
  - Very Basic
- Tied to employee evaluations
  - Very technical

Background

- Two campuses
  - Water Tower Medical Center Campus
  - Mequon Campus
- Therapy, Dosimetry, Nursing, & Front Desk rotations
Always Evolving

• Current Employee Evaluations
  – Less technical
  – Transitions/Project Symphony

• Looking to the Future/Changes
  – Billing expertise
  – More Varis/Aria focused

“Comp Out” Time

• The Process
  – Treatment unit comps
  – Special procedures
  – In-services

• Proctors
  – Depends on type of comp

“Comp Out” Time – Cont.

• Patient experience
• Concerns
  – Culture at CSM
  – Solid orientation & training
• Feedback
  – Open to change & Rotations
  – Mistakes or failures

New Technology

• New Equipment
  – Education contracted
  – Vendor & On-Site training/Off-Site training
  – Email lists
  – Physics & MD support
New Technology-Cont.

• We determine current & future comps

• Policy & Procedures/Rad. Onc. WIKI

• Ever evolving

Questions???

Thank You!