

Respiratory Care



Drew Dukes (L) and Zeke Wiechart (R) showcase the impressive capabilities of the respiratory care manikins, highlighting their importance in training and education.

PLAY A VALUABLE ROLE IN A PATIENT'S OVERALL CARE TEAM

Edison State Community College is excited about launching a new Respiratory Care program. Led by Program Director Zeke Wiechart, the program also includes Coordinator of Clinical Education Drew Dukes, Medical Director Dr. Ajit Chary, and Program Specialist Carolyn Jackson.

Wiechart recently graduated with a master's degree from Bowling Green State University. He also holds an

associate degree from Rhodes State College and a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri. He started working at Blanchard Valley Hospital as a student. There, he was a staff therapist until 2022, when he became the clinical educator for the respiratory therapy department.

"When I started at Rhodes State, I had no idea what I wanted to do," said Wiechart. "I went to an open house, and the respiratory care program director told me I could start in the upcoming semester. I started the program and quickly found out it was exactly what I should be doing."

He added, "When the role at Edison State became available, knowing I could develop more therapists for the workforce and give students the opportunity to have an amazing career like I had made deciding to transition incredibly easy."

Dukes is also a graduate of Rhodes State College and began working at Blanchard Valley Hospital after college, where he ended up working in all areas of the hospital. He currently works at Wilson Health in Sidney.

"When I was in high school, I knew I wanted to do something in medicine,

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AN UPDATE FROM THE HEALTH SCIENCES DEPARTMENT
AT EDISON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Respiratory Care Advisory Committee

- Paula Bey, NICU Manager, Miami Valley Hospital
- Jonathon Cool, Lead Therapist, Wayne HealthCare
- Rebecca Curtis, Guidance Counselor, Greenville City Schools
- William Eldeen, Manager of Acute Care, Miami Valley Hospital
- Alys Fleckenstein, Director of Respiratory Care & Inpatient Nursing, Wilson Hospital
- Aaron Hollopeter, Respiratory Manager, Upper Valley Medical Center
- Missy Komarek, Respiratory Manager, St. Marys Joint Twp. Hospital
- Jamie Koziel, Manager of Respiratory, Blanchard Valley Health System
- Nancy Mescher, Respiratory Manager, Mercer Coldwater Hospital
- Andrea Pifer, Program Director of Respiratory Care, Columbus State CC
- Kelly Rammel, Respiratory Manager, Dayton Children's Hospital
- Deanna Raper, Manager of Respiratory, Wayne HealthCare
- Jade Sartin, Registered Respiratory Therapist Manager, Mercy Health
- Sara Trost, Clinical Educator, Miami Valley Hospital
- Jason Turner, Critical Care Manager Respiratory, Miami Valley Hospital

but I didn't know what," Dukes said. "My parents suggested respiratory therapy since I had bad asthma when I was little. It made sense, so I found the nearest college with a respiratory program, which was Rhodes State, and applied. The rest, as they say, is history."

Respiratory therapists specialize in assessing and treating patients, ranging from infants to senior citizens, to manage and control breathing problems that may have resulted from disease, trauma, or developmental issues. They train in a variety of treatment techniques and sophisticated equipment that allow them to save lives, improve the quality of life for patients, and build healthier communities.

Wiechart describes the most rewarding part of being a respiratory therapist as making a difference in a patient's life. "It's hard to put into words that feeling when a patient isn't doing well, and you can be a small reason they improve."

Students in Edison State's Respiratory Care program will learn the use of treatment processes, ventilators, and other equipment that make respiratory therapists a valuable part of a patient's care team. The program includes clinical experiences that build skills and allow for the demonstration of proficiency in real-life settings.

"Providing accessible health care within your own community is a cornerstone

of maintaining a thriving small town," said Rebecca Curtis, a Greenville guidance counselor serving on the Edison State Respiratory Care Program Advisory Committee. "The shortage of respiratory therapists has become a growing concern, and I'm confident Edison State will make an impactful contribution to the medical field."

Initial clinical partners of the program include Upper Valley Medical Center (UVMC) and Blanchard Valley Health System.

"UVMC is excited to support the expanding capabilities of Edison State as the needs for skilled and educated health care professionals is a growing demand in our region," said Aaron Hollopeter, RRT, RCP, BBA, FCCS, Cardiopulmonary Services and Neuro-Diagnostics Department Manager and Emergency Management Operations Manager at UVMC.

"There's a unique excitement in recruiting students—bringing in fresh perspectives, untapped potential, and a contagious energy," added Jami Koziel, RRT, RCP, CPFT, Clinical Manager, Respiratory Therapy at Blanchard Valley. "Each student represents not just the future of the organization but also the promise of new ideas and innovation that can redefine what's possible."

Edison State will officially launch its Respiratory Care program with the spring 2025 semester. The Respiratory Care program holds Provisional Accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (coarc.com).

To learn more about the program and admission requirements, visit edisonohio.edu/health.