



Licensure ---What does it mean to me?

In the course of the last several years, you might have wondered why you, a radiologic technologist, needs a license to do your job. You may have been angry that you have to pay a fee -- Weren't things just fine left well enough alone? Other questions as to who gets this money you are paying every two years might have been asked. With all of the buzz that has been created in defending our licensure status in Spring 2017, it is in order that an explanation of its value and a bit of history be told.

The Wisconsin Society of Radiologic Technologists (WSRT) is an affiliate of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT). You might consider the ASRT the “parent” of the WSRT. The ASRT is strongly involved in professional governance and maintaining high standards of patient care. It represents us in nationwide endeavors and assists in state government matters, whether you are a member of one, both, and neither organization. These professional societies are not to be confused with our credentialing organization, the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT). Membership in the ASRT and/ or the WSRT is voluntary. The ARRT requires that you remain continuing education standards and ascribe to its Standards of Ethics to maintain your registered status and credentialed in your particular area(s) of practice.

- The ASRT is committed to ensuring the highest standards of quality, safety, and cost effective radiologic care. It lobbied for passage of the federal CARE Bill (Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility and Excellence in Radiation Therapy and Medical Imaging Bill). This proposed legislation would have established federal minimum standards of education for persons performing all forms of medical imaging and radiation therapy. The ASRT, with most other state societies fought for 11 years to bring this patient protection law to passage. It received wide bipartisan support. Unfortunately, in 2006, the law was tabled at the last minute on the last day of the Congressional session. Like the fate of many bills in Congress, this law did not receive the priority it deserved despite the benefits to patient care and cost savings it represented. The ASRT, after dedicating considerable resources to its passage, decided to change course and assist the states in enacting their own laws to ensure that patients were imaged by competent personnel. The WSRT leadership approved and took on this mission for our state, where no standards of practice for radiography existed. After two state legislative sessions, 2009 Act 106 was passed and signed into law on February 4, 2010. Wisconsin joined 39

other states at that time that had licensure laws established. Today, only 5 states do not have radiography licensure, and most of those states have active licensure laws pending.

2009 Act 106 established that persons irradiating patients for medical imaging purposes in Wisconsin be educated and competent to do so. The passage of the ARRT Radiography Registry was sufficient to satisfy this requirement and no additional state continuing education requirements were made necessary. For persons working in limited scope capacities, such as in clinics and other venues, a Limited Xray Machine operator permit (LXMO) was created for those who pass an exam, much like the Registry exam, specific for their area of radiography. Abdominal and pelvic imaging by LXMO permittees is prohibited. LXMO permit holders must also complete biannual continuing education to continue to practice. Both licensed technologists and LXMO permit holders pay a state fee every two years which covers the associated administrative costs of licensure including the Radiography Examining Board, one of the most valuable aspects of the licensure law.

To get back to the question of “What does licensure do for me?”, the creation of the Radiography Examining Board (REB) is one of the answers. Before the law passed, radiologic technologists of Wisconsin had no voice in any of the practice matters that affected them. Now we do! The REB consists of:

Three members (registered technologists) that practice radiography; A radiologist (physician) member, licensed and board certified in radiology; A Radiologic physicist certified by the American Board of Radiology; 2 public members—2 persons not engaged or connected to the practice of radiology—required by state law.

The REB is charged with keeping the practice of radiography up to the highest national standards, and deliberating practice issues that come before it. This includes addressing disciplinary issues for individuals who do not follow proper patient care standards and violate the ARRT Standards of Ethics. Likewise, should you find yourself in a situation that puts your job and career in jeopardy, the state board can be your best advocate. This is because radiologic technologists like yourself, volunteer their time to be on the state board. Technologists understand our roles best and the practical matters we face, including predicaments in the course of patient care. The representation that the Radiography Examining Board affords you, and the requirements of persons irradiating patients as stated in the Wisconsin licensure law help to protect our unique role in health care, and most of all, our patients well-being. You can apply to be a technologist on the state board as well!

Although the licensure law is primarily patient-centered, it is also protective of our role in health care. In the legislative process that brought licensure to Wisconsin, it was realized that many other health care personnel groups were eager to perform our jobs, and decide the direction of our practices. We encountered nursing groups, anesthesiologists, chiropractors, physicians and lesser educated personnel who stood ready to assume our medical imaging duties. We learned that phlebotomists, receptionists, and even environmental service staff were allowed to perform radiography. Why? Because there was no law in place that prevented them from doing so. In 2016, the (federal) Veteran’s Administration was going to permit advanced practice registered nurses to “order, perform, supervise and interpret” medical imaging studies. The VA withdrew that proposal for various reasons, largely due to the opposition of radiologist groups, and the

advocacy of the ASRT and technologists who took the time to write and express their opposition. It is a powerful example of how our unique role in health care can be easily relinquished to others by a short-sighted government action without advocacy. Can you imagine having to train nurses or others such as medical assistants to do your job? After all the education you've been through and its associated costs? You might argue that hospitals require technologists to be registered, due to Joint Commission requirements and licensure is not necessary. However, a great portion of radiography takes place outside of the hospital environment. Without licensure, there is no requirement that persons educated and credentialed in radiography perform the duties of a radiographer in clinics, physician's offices and other treatment centers. When personnel unlicensed in radiography are allowed to assume the radiographer's duties, radiographer positions are displaced or eliminated. The whole practice of radiography is devalued, and the economics of radiography suffers, individually and collectively.

Licensure----it is more than just a fee. Licensure ensures that Wisconsin's patients are imaged only by persons who have demonstrated competence in the practice of radiography, whether as a full scope registered technologist or limited practice LXMO permit holder. Licensure is what makes registered radiologic technologists professionals on a state level. The WSRT has been active, along with the ASRT and ARRT in assisting Wisconsin in retaining its state board and licensure status. There is much at stake for all radiologic technologists. Please log on to www.wsrt.net for the latest news on these issues. The Wisconsin Society of Radiologic Technologists is your state voice in advocating for radiologic technologists and welcomes your support through membership and active participation in its activities.