

Get the how-to for hands-free eye irrigation.

ORDER DIRECT TO SAVE: CALL 800.423.8659

The Morgan Lens
ZiMorTan Inc.

CONTACT US FOR A FREE TRAINING TOOL



ENACONNECTION

February 2022

Patient Care on the Go

Transport Nursing Career Requires Certification, Fast Critical-Thinking Skills

BY MELANIE PADGETT POWERS ENA CONNECTION CONTRIBUTOR



Transport nurses have considerable autonomy with their patients and must have quick critical thinking skills. @iStock.com/DIMcCoy

Privacy Notice - This site uses cookies and other technology to improve your experience. By continuing to use this site, you are agreeing to our [Privacy Policy](#).

Close

Sharon Purdom, BSN, RN, CFRN, CEN, NREMT, spent 17 years as a helicopter transport nurse, flying to car crashes, heart attack victims and home accidents. Unlike in the ER, she was often able to focus on only one patient at a time.

She absolutely loved it.

“I always wanted to be a flight nurse since nursing school. I’m intrigued by trauma care,” Purdom said. “What appealed to me is the fact that you are going to transport that patient to the highest level of care.”

Purdom, who lives in Marengo, Illinois, is now a national flight nurse and clinical coach with Med-Trans Corporation. She staffs and trains new transport teams at Med-Trans locations across the United States.

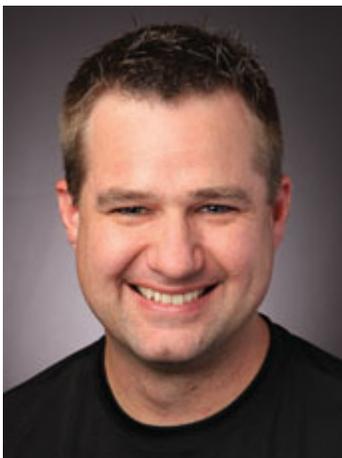
On land and in the air, transport nurses seem to have exhilarating, fast-paced, exciting careers. Yet it’s also a demanding career, requiring fast critical thinking, strong communication skills and a never-ending desire for learning, according to those who work in the specialty. A great transport nurse also needs to have deep critical care and pharmacology knowledge and must take the time to learn more about disease pathophysiology.

There are three types of transport nurses. Ground typically transports a patient from one facility to another. Fixedwing transport nurses help in rural areas that have no access to tertiary care. Many fixed-wing and helicopter transports are interfacility for specialized procedures or treatments not available at a facility, Purdom said. Helicopter transports bring patients from incident scenes, such as a car accident or a workplace or home. Fixed-wing airplanes can respond to a scene, and EMS will meet the team at the closest airport.

Many transport companies require transport nurses to have three to five years of experience plus certification in critical care and/or emergency nursing. There are two separate certifications a company will likely require you to have or to obtain within the first year of your position: the Certified Flight Registered Nurse credential or the Certified Transport Registered Nurse credential from the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing.

The Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association recommends all transport nurses attain the CFRN or CTRN credential. Also, the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems requires nurses at accredited transport programs to be specialty certified within two years of

Training for flight is more involved than ground transport, noted Christopher Benson, BSN, PHRN, CEN, TCRN, CFRN, a flight nurse with Mercy Flight Western New York and a transport nurse with Port Area Ambulance Service in Port Allegany, Pennsylvania. For flight, the nurse also must learn about radio communication, command structure and how to take care of patients in a helicopter or plane.



Christopher Benson, BSN, PHRN, CEN, TCRN, CFRN

“



“Being an ED nurse really prepares you for being a flight nurse because you don’t know what you’re getting — it’s the unexpected.”

— Sharon Purdom, BSN, RN, CFRN, CEN,
NREMT

Transport nursing is driven by sets of protocols and standing orders, and joining the profession requires memorizing them, Benson said.

And, it helps to be a quick critical thinker, Purdom added.

Anyone looking to become a transport nurse should consider picking up a few extra shifts in the ICU, especially the neuro or cardiac ICU. Obstetric experience can also be helpful because there are ample OB transports, Purdom said.

To prepare to become a transport nurse, consider joining the local ambulance service, which will provide experience in hand-offs and radio communication, Benson said. Most transport services will allow potential candidates to do a flight ride-along to ensure you are comfortable flying in a small plane or helicopter.

Transport nurses must also have stellar communication skills and be comfortable with autonomy, yet also able to work well with a partner, such as paramedics, respiratory therapists, other nurses or, sometimes, physicians, Benson and Purdom said.

“The autonomy is unbelievable; you don’t have a doctor right there,” Purdom said. “It’s just you and your partner, and you’ve got to make make critical decisions for your patient.”

Weather often is a factor in performing the job. Helicopters in particular can be grounded because of poor weather — either before or after reaching the patient. Safety culture is a primary focus.

Both Benson and Purdom stressed that transport nurses must be self-motivated to always learn more.

“You have to seek out the issues in which you’re weak and learn more about them,” Benson said.

“It’s a very, very humbling specialty,” he continued. “You might be a crack ED nurse, but then you get into flight and you’re going to get into stuff that you’ve never encountered before.”

Changes to Transport Nurse Certifications

The two transport nurse certifications — Certified Flight Registered Nurse and Certified Transport Registered Nurse — now have separate, distinct exam content outlines.

For each certification program, every five years the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing conducts a role delineation study. An advisory committee of transport nurse

the CTRN will take effect on Feb. 28.

There are more than 5,000 CFRNs and 360 CTRNs, and the CTRN program has grown year after year, according to BCEN.

“Medical advancements, regionalization of specialty care and the pandemic response have led to more ground transports, which underlined the need for ground transport nurses to have groundspecific knowledge in order to deliver the best possible care to every patient,” explained BCEN Director of Certification and Accreditation Amy Grand, MSN, RN.



Amy Grand, MSN, RN

Learn more at <https://bcen.org/cfrn>