



April 9, 2020

Pennsylvania Extends Temporary Licenses for Graduate Perfusionists During Coronavirus Emergency

Summary:

Perfusionists have a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Critically ill patients who are infected with coronavirus principally suffer from respiratory symptoms or respiratory failure. In the most acute cases, this will result in the use of Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO), commonly known as life support.

ECMO provides prolonged cardiac and respiratory support to patients whose heart and lungs are unable to supply an adequate amount of gas exchange or perfusion to sustain life. Operation and monitoring of ECMO are within the primary scope of practice for perfusionists.

The American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion canceled its spring certification exam because of the pandemic. Since the perfusion community is so small, this exam is only offered in the spring and fall, with the next exam now scheduled in October 2020. Perfusion students are required to pass this exam to obtain a two-year Temporary Graduate Perfusionist License and proceed to full licensure.

Given the current demand for perfusionists and cancellation of their spring certification exam, the Department of State requested, and Governor Wolf granted, a six-month extension of all Temporary Graduate Perfusionist Licenses.

Additionally, the department received a temporary waiver of the limitation that temporary emergency perfusionists can only provide services once during a 72-hour period. For the length of the COVID-19 Disaster Declaration, they can provide these services an unlimited number of times.

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