



News Release

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NMCC offers critical care transport training to nursing and EMS professionals

Aroostook County - Twenty nursing and emergency medical services professionals from around the country are in the process of completing advanced training at Northern Maine Community College in critical care transport. The Critical Care Emergency Medical Transport Program (CCEMTP) is an 88-hour program being offered over the course of 12 days between January 17 and February 1 to help medical professionals understand and meet the special needs of critical care patients during transport.

“The students attending this training represent a great mix of medical professionals who are involved daily in the care of critical patients,” said Leah Buck, assistant dean of continuing education. “There are emergency department nurses, paramedics, flight nurses, critical care nurses and military personnel attending the training sessions. Geographically, we have local providers alongside professionals from central and southern Maine, Texas, Montana, Michigan, Connecticut and Maryland. They each bring with them valuable experiences of what they have encountered while caring for patients. The sharing of information, ideas and best practices makes for a very dynamic training opportunity.”

While traditional paramedic training programs, such as NMCC’s associate degree program, teach essential skills and provide a knowledge base for the management of patients in the pre-hospital setting, these programs do not typically teach the skills and knowledge necessary to manage critical care patients between hospitals, specialty referral centers and extended care facilities. At the same time, nurses who manage critical care patients within the hospital may have insufficient experience or the confidence needed to function outside the hospital environment. The CCEMTP program provides the advanced training needed for these professionals.

With the regionalization of health care facilities, it is common practice to transport patients who need more advanced care from smaller hospitals, such as those in rural areas like Aroostook County, to tertiary care hospitals, which are larger facilities offering a broader complement of services. Maine has three tertiary care facilities: Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor, Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston, and Maine Medical Center in Portland.

“Even when a patient is stable, three hours is a long time to transport that person to a tertiary care facility. When that patient is unstable, a higher level of training is needed to safely make that trip,” said Dr. Peter Goth, the medical director for the program being offered at NMCC, as well an emergency room physician at The Aroostook Medical Center. “The EMS services in Aroostook County are great, but there is a need to have additional training for critical care transport. The care and equipment that is provided during the transfer between hospitals should match what is available in the hospital.”

According to Dr. Goth, who also represents Region 5 EMS at the Maine Medical Direction and Practice Board, the plan is to develop regional based critical care teams, not only for use in transport situations, but for use in hospitals as well to assist with patient stabilization. These teams would be an ‘elite’ level of provider, providing a regional network to complement the already existing Life Flight program.

“Lifeflight has set some great standards for training and performance,” said Dr. Goth, who serves on Lifeflight of Maine’s Board of Directors. “The advanced air way training we are doing today is identical to the training done for Lifeflight, because anyone doing critical care transport should be working at that level of performance.” It is a standard with which he is very familiar, since he has been working with Lifeflight since its inception and continues to provide air flight training to its crew.

In addition to overseeing the medical direction of the CCEMTP program being offered at NMCC, Dr. Goth taught the day two session of the program, covering advanced airway training, with topics such as retrograde intubation, paralytics, advanced airway procedures, pleural decompression and chest tube care.

He is joined by a team of expert instructors with a broad range of clinical expertise in caring for critically ill patients. They include Sandra Benton from Lifeflight of Maine; Dr. Beth Collamore from Cary Medical Center; Dr. Roger Pelli from The Aroostook Medical Center; Lucy Richards and Margo Cerrato from TAMC; Ann King from Cary Medical Center; and NMCC faculty members Susan Dugal, Paula Flora, and Daryl Boucher.

The CCEMTP training was developed by the University of Maryland – Baltimore County. NMCC has a site license to offer the training in northern Maine. The College offered the training in Aroostook County for the first time in 2003, at which time there were only two CCEMTP certified individuals in the region. Since that time, a total of 36 medical professionals, the majority of whom are from the local region, have obtained their certification after completing the CCEMTP program at NMCC.

As an added service for the local ambulance services and hospitals, the College once again offered those currently CCEMTP certified to come and take part in various parts of the training session in order to meet their continuing education requirement. In order to renew their certification, individuals need 36 continuing education credit hours at the advanced life support (ALS) level, with an emphasis on critical care. “We have encouraged all of our program graduates to return and fully participate,” said Buck.

“Providing the initial training is essential, but it is equally important that critical care providers stay abreast of new procedures. We have opened the course to these experienced transport providers so that they can share their experiences with the new participants and learn about new developments in the world of critical care transport,” said Daryl Boucher, NMCC nursing instructor and coordinator of the College’s EMS program. Boucher himself has been CCEMTP certified since 2001.

“I continue to be impressed and encouraged by the way Aroostook County providers at all levels respond to the challenge of high performance in critical care transport medicine. It’s astounding,” said Dr. Goth. “I am impressed at how capable they are and how quickly they moved up to perform at national level standards.”

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Above: Dr. Peter Goth (standing, center) provides advanced airway training to participants in the CCEMTP program underway at Northern Maine Community College.

Left: Rita Zbylut, an emergency room flight nurse at Cary Medical Center, and Scott Michaud, clinical coordinator of NMCC’s emergency medical services program, go over pediatric resuscitation techniques as part of the CCEMTP program, while Daryl Boucher, NMCC EMS coordinator, looks on.