AMARILLO COLLEGE
RADIATION THERAPY PROGRAM

CLINICAL SITE INFORMATION AND APPLICATION PACKET

Amarillo College

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Introduction and Welcome

A prospective student for the Amarillo College Radiation Therapy program has contacted us and submitted your clinic as a desired clinical site for their training to become a radiation therapist!

Our program is slated to become the **first and only JRCERT ACCREDITED** 100% online radiation therapy program. If you are concerned about what you have heard or experienced regarding other online programs, it is worth noting that, while the other established online programs state that they are accredited, it is their **university** that is accredited, **NOT** their radiation therapy program! Our radiation therapy program is accredited by the ONLY agency that accredits radiation therapy programs, the JRCERT, www.jrcert.org. Thus, we can ensure a high-quality program as college/university accreditation does NOT inspect the quality of the radiation therapy program. Only the JRCERT does that.

In the 25 Years since I've Been Program Director for Amarillo College Radiation Therapy, our program has had a 97% first-time pass rate on the ARRT Certification Exam (the national averages typically in the low to mid 80% range). The information/application packet linked below includes the following: www.actx.edu/radiation/

- **Document:** *The Benefits of Being a Clinical Affiliate* (becoming a clinical education site offers many advantages to the clinical site!)
- **General overview** of the Amarillo College Radiation Therapy Program (via FAQ's)
  - ***Clinical staff training and CE credits to staff for becoming a Clinical Instructor***
  - **More information regarding accreditation and why accreditation is so important**
  - **Can online radiation therapy education be effective?**
  - **The clinical site's role in selecting students *(yes, you have a BIG say in what student/students are selected into your clinic!)***
- **Clinical Affiliate Application/Information Form – including ARRT clinical requirements (completed form is required)**
- **List of ARRT required clinical competencies**

Please review this information, and if you are interested in helping to give an ACCREDITED educational option for a highly motivated and interested prospective radiation therapy student, please contact me, and complete **the Clinical Affiliate Application Information form** and ***Clinical affiliate acknowledgement form***.

The Clinical application forms are in the form of an editable pdf that you can type information directly into the document. There is a "submit" button on the last page wherein you can select your email server to easily send the pdf directly through email.
You may also submit the forms electronically by scanning and attaching to an email, or fax to:
Attn: Tony Tackitt 806-354-6076
or snail-mail to:
Tony Tackitt c/o Amarillo College
PO Box 447
Amarillo, TX 79178

Upon review of the Clinical Affiliate application, once it has been determined that the clinical affiliate meets the criteria required by accreditation and the ARRT, the program will send a Standard Clinical Affiliate contract (Amarillo College has 17 healthcare programs that all utilize this contract). Of course, if need be, the document can be amended as per specific clinical site guidelines/requirements.

I invite you to contact me about our program and how we can be mutually beneficial to each other and to the profession at tmtackitt@actx.edu or at 806-354-6063

Sincerely,

Tony Tackitt, M.Ed, RT(T)
Program Director-Amarillo College Radiation Therapy

Benefits (to the clinic) of being a Clinical Affiliate:

- The opportunity to **recruit top candidates** (you essentially get a 2 year job interview with prospective employees as they train in your clinic, so you know which students would make the best future employees). As a result, educational facilities have Increased **long-term staffing**
- **Reduced costs** associated with staff recruitment. Even if you are not in need of employees now, you still have the opportunity to "grow and groom" someone that might want to fill any future vacancies.
- **Also, reduced costs** associated with prospective employee interviews
- **Reduced orientation/training**. New hires already have a significant amount of experience working at your facility (they're already well oriented to the hospital/staff/etc.).
- historical tendency for **reduced employee costs** (starting salary/benefits etc.) due to supply/demand influx of local graduates (and graduates often willing to take lower salaries in order to stay closer to home, and happier to be staying close to home!).
- In addition to the above, **higher employee retention** rates at educational facilities due to geography: Graduates that grew up in your local area typically prefer to stay closer to home.
- Students can't replace staff therapists, and while they do take more time and attention early on, overall they provide a **net benefit with respect to workload**. By the time they've completed only ¼-1/3 of their clinical hours, they are typically acclimated enough to routines to provide a net benefit with respect to workload.
- Research indicates overall **increased job satisfaction among staff** in teaching institutions that is related to the teaching environment (while this may seem counter-intuitive to some at first glance, and it is not uncommon that clinical staff may grumble at times with respect to working with students, research that controls for variables actually indicates that teaching facilities have staff with higher levels of job satisfaction, and that the increased satisfaction is directly related to working with students). Staff might sometimes rather balk at the extra responsibilities, but in this case, research indicates that the extra responsibilities tend to increase overall job satisfaction. *As an analogy: The "easy" choice (not working with students) is not always the most rewarding choice. If I give my son the choice of practicing his French Horn (he's a music major in college) or playing X-Box, he'll play X-Box! But playing his Horn gives him more long-term satisfaction in spite of the extra effort—indeed, in no small part, because of the extra effort involved. Similarly, while staff may at times not outwardly embrace working with students, they DO have a tendency to have higher levels of job satisfaction as a result of sharing their knowledge with students!*
- **Reduced staff burnout** (students providing fresh faces and relationships, resulting in lower levels of burnout). Staff can get in a rut over time doing the same kinds of procedures over and over. Students bring fresh faces into the clinic, which (research indicates) can help reduce stress and burnout for staff, and help them appreciate their positions. Additionally, responding to student questions can help staff hone their own critical thinking skills by continually evaluating why they use the techniques they use, and even create new ways of improving upon various techniques.

There is also a certain public recognition attached to the teaching function (professionalism). Playing a role in the education of radiation therapists can enhance the image of the facility within the field of radiation oncology, the broader health care community, and among the citizens and population of the region. Being recognized within the community as a teaching institution is always a plus for any institution.

Food for thought: *Professionalism, in no small part, means that we actively engage in activities that enhance and further the profession. It's not something we vote on, it's something we simply do because guiding/educating (literally) the future of our profession is perhaps the most direct and meaningful way in which our practitioners can sustain and advance our profession. Thus, education is a cornerstone of professionalism, as it safeguards and directs the very future of our field!*

AMARILLO COLLEGE RADIATION THERAPY FAQ's and GENERAL OVERVIEW

Frequently Asked Questions

Would our clinical staff receive any training for their role as a clinical instructor and program rules and regulations for the students?

Yes! While it will be up to the clinical affiliate to orient the student to their facility, the program is in the process of developing a **2 hour ASRT-approved CE credit** ***(to be offered to all clinical affiliate staff free of charge!)*** clinical orientation/effective clinical instruction videocast.

Do we, the clinic, have any say about whether or not a student is accepted into the program through our clinic?

Yes!! The prospective student must complete a 16 hour "job shadow" with any proposed distance site. There is a form that is filled-out by RTT staff that observe the student during this job shadow that counts as points towards acceptance.

Additionally, each distance student applicant must undergo a **formal interview** with YOUR CLINICAL SITE STAFF held between April 15 and May 10 (specific date and times coordinated between the clinical site and the college). ***The prospective clinical affiliate has the opportunity to reject the prospective student for admission into the clinic based on the Interview results.***

More details about this process will be delivered to the clinical affiliate when the clinical site is approved through this application process (or, if desired, upon request by the proposed clinical site)

Can online radiation therapy education be effective?

In short, YES!

For a full and complete description (our JRCERT accreditation proposal that was accepted) of how our program has built its online curriculum delivery to be as effective, if not more so, than our already effective traditional program, **see our proposal at www**

But here's a short summary: The **clinical component** of the program is essentially unchanged from our traditional program. The same forms will be used and the same rules will apply. We have a faculty Clinical Coordinator that will oversee clinical operations and distribute information and forms to the clinical affiliate (many "forms" utilized by the program are electronic). The clinical affiliate will appoint a Clinical Supervisor (required for ALL radiation therapy and radiography programs) that will serve as the liaison between the clinical affiliate and the program Clinical Coordinator. Clinical Supervisor role and responsibilities are described later in this clinical affiliate application packet.

- Depending on the semester, students will be in the clinical area 2-3 ½ days per week

Labs will be taught through the program, with the student meeting with the clinical affiliate Clinical Supervisor to review some skills during the early part of the program (Clinical Supervisor description and role described later on in this packet).

Academic classes will be all online. Online curriculum delivery consists of workbooks (written by program faculty) with associated podcast lectures guiding the student through the academic curriculum. Additionally, students work together in small online groups connected by audio and video. Students also are connected via social media, discussion boards, and other community-building means. Faculty have regular contact with students and are available to address questions/concerns via audio and video means.

We are already a clinical affiliate with another program. Is it possible to also affiliate with Amarillo College's program?

Yes. But if you are already affiliated with another program, there are procedures to follow. Contact the Amarillo College Program Director if you are affiliated with another program so that we can ensure that we are in compliance with accreditation regulations described at http://www.jrcert.org/site-utilization/

There are some other big online university-based radiation therapy programs that say they are accredited. Are they really accredited?

As described in the greeting page, **While there are other online radiation therapy programs available, their radiation therapy programs are NOT accredited**! The universities that offer these radiation therapy programs are accredited, but their radiation therapy programs are NOT accredited!

Undergoing **college/university accreditation** typically entails (for the radiation therapy program) only a couple of pages of paperwork with no direct contact with the accrediting agency whatsoever.
On the other hand, JRCERT (radiation therapy and radiography) program-specific accreditation results in about 400 hours of documentation reviewing ALL aspects of the program in exhausting detail-- including resources, faculty, curriculum, results (ARRT exam results, etc.), and MUCH more--culminating in a days-long site visit by a site-team consisting of other radiation therapy professionals (the site visit includes private interviews with all students).

The JRCERT is the ONLY radiation therapy program accrediting agency. To see if a program is accredited by JRCERT, you can go to the main JRCERT web site at www.jrcert.org or you can take the short-cut directly to their "find a program area" at https://portal.jrcertaccreditation.org/summary/accreditedprogramsearch.aspx

Note: While there will be multiple programs listed that offer some form of "distance education" we expect to be the only program that offers 100% fully online as a primary means of delivering curriculum to all students. And, again, we have to pass rigorous accreditation standards in order to maintain our JRCERT accreditation status.

Why is it important to have a JRCERT accredited option for online radiation therapy?

As you are undoubtedly aware, the job market has been negatively impacted by the influx of large numbers of graduates from non-accredited radiation therapy programs. Our program encourages prospective students to enroll in an accredited option that enrolls smaller classes than the other options currently available. Over time, having a high-quality accredited online option that carefully monitors enrollment can have a more positive impact on the job market.

Additionally, professionalism entails maintaining rigorous standards of excellence. As described earlier, program accreditation (vs. college or university general accreditation) means that the program has undergone a detailed and extensive review of all aspects of the program, ensuring a quality program.

Graduates of a program that has passed the quality test of accreditation are likely to be high quality students. And higher quality graduates, over time, enhance the overall professionalism in our field!

CLINICAL AFFILIATE APPLICATION INFORMATION

1. Proposed Clinical Affiliate Information:

a. Clinical Facility Name:

_____

b. Clinical Facility Address:

_____

c. Department Director Contact: Phone _____

email: _____

d. ☐ (check or "x") Accreditation: accredited by JCAHO (The Joint Commission), ACRO, ACR, ACC or an equivalent accrediting body. If yes, by which organization?

_____

e. Facility CEO/CFO or other chief administrative officer Name, contact (phone, email)

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

f. Facility type: (check/"x" one)

☐ 1. Hospital

☐ 2. Outpatient clinic

☐ 3. Other (describe) _____

2. Clinical staff: Please respond to the following as they relate to the organization/staffing of your department.

_____ a. Number of full-time (FTE) ARRT Registered radiation therapy positions scheduled to be present on a typical day during the time (about 8:00-5:00) that students will be on site (ex. If there is one full time RTT and two ½ time RTT's, that would be 2 FTE's):

_____ b. Number of certified Dosimetrists (CMD's)

_____ c. Number of licensed (board certified) Radiation Oncologists

_____ d. Number of licensed (board certified) Radiation Oncologists expected on site on a daily basis (average)

3. TREATMENT EQUIPMENT

In order to be in compliance with current accreditation Standards, students will need to be able to rotate through the following areas within the radiation therapy department:

Treatment machines, simulation, dosimetry (typically a single 3-5 week dosimetry rotation), with some observation in brachytherapy, as well as the opportunity to fashion a handful of custom blocks (electron or photon*). (Students will also need to be able to have a rotation through rad onc nursing)*

_____ Number of linear accelerators (total)

_____ Number of linear accelerators with electron capability

_____ *Average daily patient load per linear accelerator, estimates are ok (excluding tomo and KV)

Make/model of treatment units (including any KV units) example "Varian Trilogy":

_____
_____

Simulator(s)
make/model(s):_____
Treatment Planning System:
_____
Record & Verify system (if applicable):
_____

Please check or "x" the following that apply:

☐ *Access to observe any brachytherapy (LDR and/or HDR)?
If brachy is checked (above):
☐ LDR
☐ HDR
☐ *If no, could this be arranged through another nearby facility? (check or "x" only if yes)
☐ Access to a block/mold room area where student can participate in making blocks (either electron or photon), bolus formation and thermoplastics (aquaplast) formation (this can be on live patients or under simulated circumstances)?
☐ EPID
☐ any form of IGRT
☐ Tomotherapy
☐ CyberKnife
☐ Gamma knife
☐ Access to observe and participate in routine machine Quality checks
☐ Access to observe a treatment machine full calibration
☐ Access to work directly with other advanced or complex immobilization devices (vacuum bags, foaming agents, belly boards, etc.)

Special Procedures: though these may not come along very often, is the facility equipped to treat (and allow the student to observe)
☐ TBI
☐ TSI
☐ craniospinal axis (total spinal field)
☐ Respiratory gating
☐ Other (please explain, e.g. pediatrics, etc.) _____

OTHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITES
The following are areas or opportunities that could be advantageous for students to observe or, in the case of specific personnel areas, shadow a non-radiation therapy staff member to get a more complete view of the healthcare team and their role/responsibilities.

- **Please check or "x" areas where you feel the student might be able to get some observational time.**

☐ Tumor Boards or Chart Rounds where student can sit in and observe.
☐ Regular departmental meetings

☐ Medical Oncology (Chemo observation)
☐ Dietician/nutritional counseling
☐ Social worker
☐ Pastoral care (chaplain)
☐ Hospice care (outpatient or in-patient)
☐ Reception
☐ Diagnostic radiology (for students that are not already ARRT registered radiographers)
☐ *If no, could these be arranged through another nearby facility? (check or "x" only if yes)

IMPORTANT: Please send as an email attachment documentation of the total number of patients treated on treatment machines, along with a breakdown of the diagnoses from a recent year (within the past two years). Send email to Tony Tackitt at tmtackitt@actx.edu with the subject heading "***(Your clinic name) case load and diagnoses breakdown***".

A variety of treatment sites and other clinical experiences are required by accreditation and ARRT Standards. Some of these can be performed in a lab setting as per our lab courses (resulting in checking-off these few procedures with the student after-hours or between patients). The great majority of these can be performed during normal operational hours.
A full list of ARRT competency requirements that need to be fulfilled is found at the end of this document.

PROPOSED CLINICAL AFFILIATE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Please check or "x" the following acknowledgements regarding program requirements.

☐ I/We understand that any students will be involved in clinical duties 2-3.5 days/week (depending on the semester)
☐ I/We understand that students will be rotating through a variety of areas in and outside of the radiation therapy treatment area—including Sim, Dosimetry and Nursing.
☐ I/We understand that all clinical staff (RTT's) will work with, and evaluate the student(s). While it is not mandatory that all clinical staff be ARRT certified, all clinical radiation therapists that work with and evaluate students must be ARRT Certified and fully licensed (where applicable) in their state.
☐ I/We understand that students will receive "Direct Supervision" from clinical staff (in short, an RTT must be present in the room when the student is operating any equipment and/or positioning a patient).
☐ I/We understand that the clinical affiliate will have the final say (through an interview process and a job shadow by the prospective student) as to whether or not a student is accepted into their clinical site.
☐ I/We understand that the student can not receive a wage from the affiliate during program-scheduled clinical hours. Additionally, the student can not be used as staff or considered when making staffing decisions
☐ I/We understand that the clinical affiliate will appoint a Clinical Supervisor that will work with the program Clinical Coordinator, but will ultimately be responsible for directing the student rotations throughout the department (assigning student rotations to different areas). The Clinical Supervisor can be a department director, chief/lead therapist, staff therapist, etc. The Clinical Supervisor will need approximately 1 hour/week of release time during school semesters for managing student educational opportunities, for which the program will give direction. The Clinical Supervisor will also serve as the liaison between the Clinical Affiliate and the School/Clinical Coordinator of

the school. Clinical Supervisors can temporarily assign their duties to another qualified staff member in cases of vacation, illness, etc.

- *Clinical Supervisor Qualifications:*
  - *ARRT registered in radiation therapy*
  - *Valid state or other license where applicable*
  - *Minimum two years experience as a registered radiation therapist*
  - *Submit name and resume (CV) of proposed Clinical Supervisor, as well as photocopy of ARRT certification and state or other applicable licensure.*

Additional Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

CLICK HERE TO AUTO-SUBMIT using your email acct. or email entire form as attachment

The Remaining Pages describe the ARRT Required Competencies, and are not any forms to fill out

ARRT Required Skills:

TREATMENT MACHINE

Note: by graduation, the student must be able to demonstrate the 12 mandatory requirements on a live patient (at least once during the program), and on 7 of the 9 elective procedures (to ultimately be overseen by the program faculty).

Radiation Treatment Procedures	Mandatory or Elective		Date Completed	Patient or Simulated	Competence Verified By
Brain	Mandatory	Elective			
Primary	✓				
Metastatic	✓				
Head and Neck					
Laterals Only		✓			
Multiple Fields * to include Supraclavicular	✓				
Chest					
AP/PA	✓				
Multiple Fields *	✓				
Breast					
Tangentials Only	✓				
Tangentials with Supraclavicular	✓				
Tangentials with Supraclavicular and Posterior Axilla Boost		✓			
Tangentials with Supraclavicular and Internal Mammary		✓			
Abdomen					
AP/PA **		✓			
Multiple Fields	✓				
Para-Aortic		✓			
Pelvis					
AP/PA **		✓			
Multiple Field Supine *	✓				
Multiple Field Prone *		✓			
Inguinal		✓			
Skeletal					
Spine	✓				
Extremity	✓				
Electron Fields					
Single	✓				
Abutting Fields		✓			

* Multiple fields may include IMRT.
** AP/PA Abdomen and AP/PA Pelvis does not include treatments for metastatic spine disease.

Below is the ARRT list of Sim, Dosimetry and Treatment Accessory skills that must be demonstrated in the clinical setting at some point before graduation. The program provides coursework to prepare the students to be ready to demonstrate these skills

(note: dosimetry and Tx Accessory skills do not have to be demonstrated in conjunction with a current or even live patient. It is acceptable to, for example, create an imaginary patient for a dosimetry procedure, and—again, for example—have the student create a thermoplastic device on a staff member or other non-patient)

Simulation Procedures		
Brain		
Head and Neck		
Chest		
Breast		
Abdomen		
Pelvis		
Skeletal		
Dosimetry		
Single Field		
Parallel Opposed Fields with Field Shaping		
Geometric Gap		
Weighted Fields		
Wedged Fields		
Computer Generated Isodose Plan		
Electron Field		
Treatment Accessory Devices		
Custom Block (Electron)		
Bolus		
Custom Immobilization Devices for Thorax or Abdomen/Pelvis (e.g., Foaming Agents, Vacuum Bags)		
Thermoplastic Mold		