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POSITION PAPER ON DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR EMS EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Following an analysis of national EMS agendas, National Association of EMS Educators developed a position supporting educator degree requirements in EMS. This position provided a framework for degree requirements at varying levels of EMS education. Identified support and appreciation for interprofessional approaches as well as EMS specific education was included in the position. The need for an educational workforce capable of providing robust degree options and innovative education emerged in response to the growing academic needs and professional complexities within EMS. **Key words:** EMS education; degrees; degree requirements for EMS educators

PREHOSPITAL EMERGENCY CARE 2020;00:000–000

SUMMARY

It is the position of the National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) Board of Directors that all EMS educators complete a degree from an accredited University or College. In this position, the academic level of the degree varies based on the role of the educator. In support of interprofessional approaches to EMS education and the broad nature of topics covered in curricula, the focus of a degree may vary. This position supports EMS educators having degrees specific to our profession, as well as in education, clinical sciences, related healthcare disciplines, and related professions. This position was formed in support of preceding national agendas and recognizes the need for degree requirements for leaders of our profession. This position supports the philosophy of NAEMSE and the maturation of an education workforce capable of offering innovative education and robust degree options.

BACKGROUND

EMS Agenda for the Future recognized the vital role of education in developing EMS professionals for

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practice and life-long learning (1). The agenda advocated for programs to have collaborative affiliations to academic institutes to offer more degree options (1). Education was recognized as an achievement within EMS Agenda for the Future, which included descriptive characteristics of EMS curriculum (1). EMS Education Agenda for the Future described the need for an educational system to be based on patient care needs and evidence with participation from various professionals (2). More so, the professionals, components, and interrelationships in the EMS educational system would be strong enough to exist independently of any national EMS organization (2).

Throughout EMS Agenda 2050 were statements related to education and educators. Statements were made specifically supporting interprofessional approaches in EMS education, importance of education guided by research and patient care, and for all EMS education to occur in academic settings (3). Content in EMS Agenda 2050 supported the ability for EMS students, clinicians, and professionals to learn content from various aspects of clinical practice, non-clinical healthcare fields, and other professions (3). EMS Agenda 2050 specifically described the degreed paramedic as a clinician of the future (3). Additionally, the agenda specifically described for aspiring EMS leaders to obtain advance degrees preparing them for leading and improving people-centered EMS systems (3). More so, EMS Agenda 2050 specifically recognized the importance of having educators that were carefully selected, developed, and educated to prepare future EMS clinicians (3).

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) developed standards and guidelines for paramedic program accreditation (4). CAAHEP standards and guidelines inform Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for Emergency Medical Services Professions to assess and recommend paramedic program accreditation to CAAHEP (4). Included in CAAHEP standards and guidelines are degree requirements for some identified roles in paramedic education programs (4). However, these standards did not include requirements for other EMS education programs such as EMT or continuing education (4). A general position on degree requirements for all EMS educators in the United States could not be identified prior to this position.

POSITION STATEMENT

Upon analysis and reflection of the national agendas and accreditation documents preceding this

position, an identifiable increasing trend advocating for EMS educator qualifications, curriculum content beyond EMS scope of practice, and interprofessional approaches to EMS education emerged. The need for EMS clinicians and professionals to have higher order thinking skills and non-algorithmic approaches in our profession emerged in response to the increasing complexity of healthcare and public safety. Therefore, NAEMSE takes a position of support for EMS educator degree requirements. The progressive steps in degree requirements and program positions are in support of program succession planning. This position supports the following degree requirements within varying educational levels for the following educator roles:

EMR Education

Instructor: Credentialed instructor in accordance with local state rules.

EMT Education

Lab Educator: Associate degree
 Primary Instructor(s): Associate degree, with preference for working towards bachelor degree
 Assistant/Associate Program Director, and Coordinator(s): Associate degree, with preference for working towards bachelor degree
 Program Director: Associate degree, with preference for working towards bachelor degree

AEMT Education

Lab Educator: Associate degree
 Primary Instructor(s): Bachelor degree
 Program Director, Assistant/Associate Program Director, and Coordinator(s): Bachelor degree

Paramedic Education, including specialties such as Community Paramedic and Critical Care Paramedic

Lab Educator: Associate degree, with a preference of having a bachelor degree
 Primary Instructor(s): Bachelor degree, with preference for working towards graduate degree
 Program Coordinator(s): Bachelor degree, with preference for working towards graduate degree
 Assistant/Associate Program Director: Bachelor degree, with preference for a graduate degree
 Program Director at an associate degree awarding institute: Graduate degree
 Program Director at a bachelor degree awarding institute: Doctorate

Field or Clinical Preceptor

Preceptor: Associate degree and recognized as a mentor.

Guest Lecturer for Initial Education & All Continuing EMS Education

Lecturer: Appropriately credential and educated per their professional standards along with scholarly contributions and/or recognition as an expert in their field and topic.

Graduate Education

Faculty: Graduate degree, with preference for working towards a doctorate.

Assistant/Associate Program Director: Graduate degree, with preference for working towards a doctorate and scholarly contributions

Program Director: Doctorate

All EMS Education Program Medical Director(s)

Medical Director: MD or DO, boarded in Emergency Medicine or closely related acute/critical care specialty, EMS subspecialty as well as a graduate degree are preferred.

This position supports EMS educators having degrees specific to our profession, such as Emergency Medical Services or Paramedicine, along with formal preparation to serve as an educator. In support for interprofessional approaches to EMS education, this position supports educators having EMS credentials along with a degree(s) in education (e.g., Teaching and Learning, Instructional Design, Educational Policy and Leadership), clinical sciences (e.g., Clinical Anatomy and Physiology, Preventative Medicine, Epidemiology), related healthcare profession (e.g., Nursing, Public Health, Health Policy and Administration), and related professions (e.g., Emergency Management, Fire Science, Public Administration). The broad nature of this position supports EMS educators in selecting a complementary field and degree that is reflective of their current and/or desired role in EMS education and professional interests.

In appreciation to the direct and indirect contributions made by all educators, including preceptors, on our profession and patient care, the profession must declare degree requirements for our educators to ascertain. This appreciation, recognition, and position supports the philosophy of NAEMSE and requisite need for an educational workforce capable in providing innovative education and robust degree options in academic settings to meet the increasing academic needs for EMS providers and professionals.

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