

Creepy Take 2...

Consequences of Degree Creep in Health Professions

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Brief Review: What is Degree Creep?

Simply:

Mandating higher degrees than are needed to perform a job

(<http://www.communitycollegetimes.com/Pages/Academic-Programs/Community-colleges-concerned-about-degree-creep-.aspx>)

Two foci:

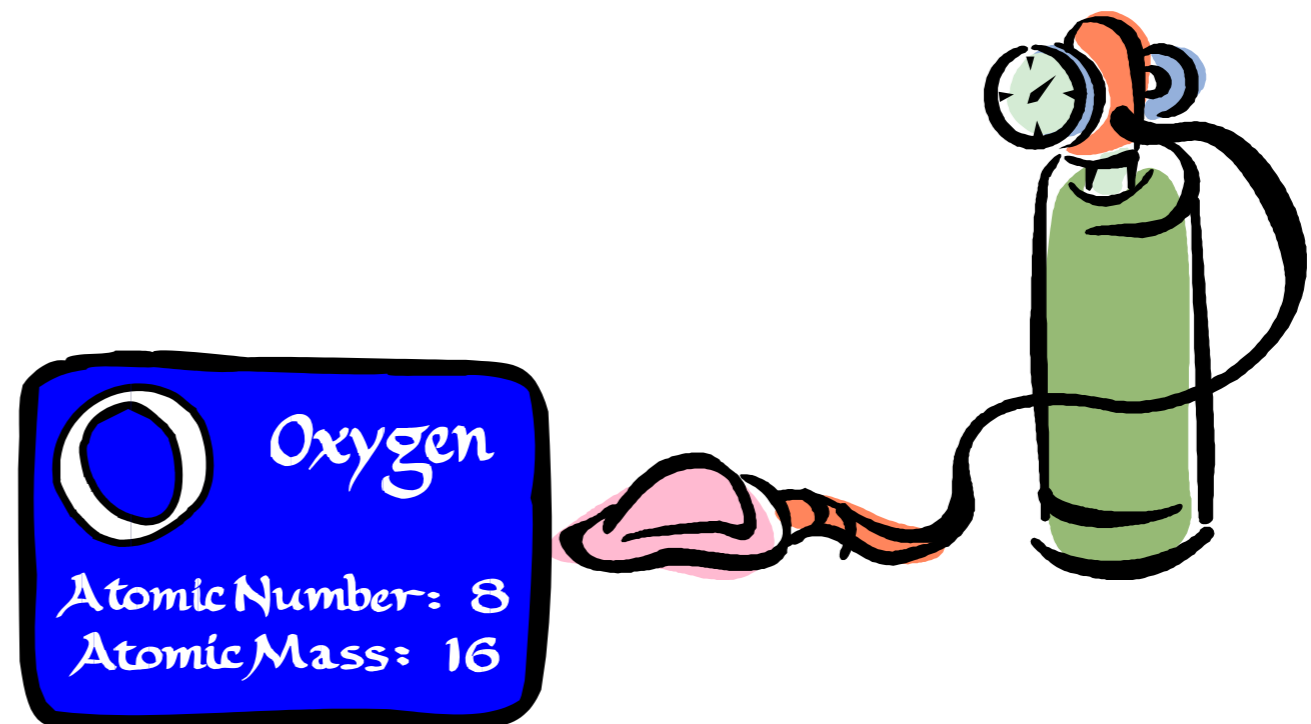
1. Degree creep for entry-level degrees that were formally AS or BS
2. Movement toward minimum doctoral degree, including “clinical doctorate”

Q. Why is this such a big deal?

A. There is a difference between maturation of a discipline and degree creep. Maturation occurs because the scope of a field advances and proper patient care requires additional education and acquisition of new skill sets.

Degree creep occurs because of factors external to the quality of patient care. It occurs in spite of a lack of supportive data.

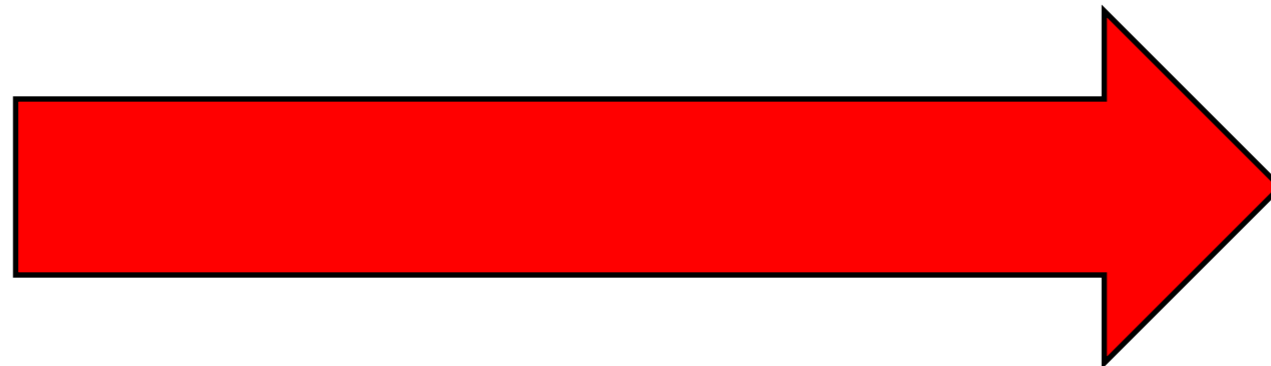
Ex. In the 40s and 50s, “inhalation therapists” primarily dealt with oxygen delivery systems (cylinders, oxygen tents, etc.) In the 60s and 70s, job scope changed so significantly that the field of “respiratory therapy” arose in its stead. It wasn’t until many years later that minimum degree requirements were established. Most would see this as a natural maturation of a field.



- Similarly, nursing, radiologic sciences, and several other fields changed significantly in the latter half of the 20th century, especially as technology has evolved. Minimum education requirements developed as a natural consequence.



- Degree creep, on the other hand arises for other reasons.



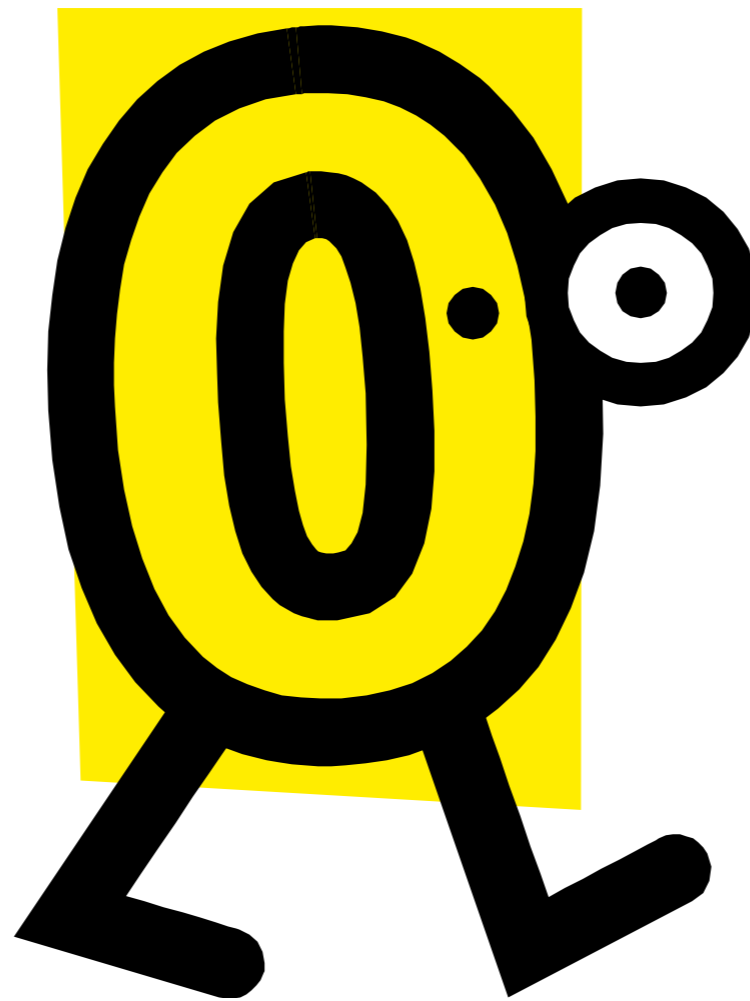
The NN2RC Story-Tommy Rust, President

Impetus for Degree Creep

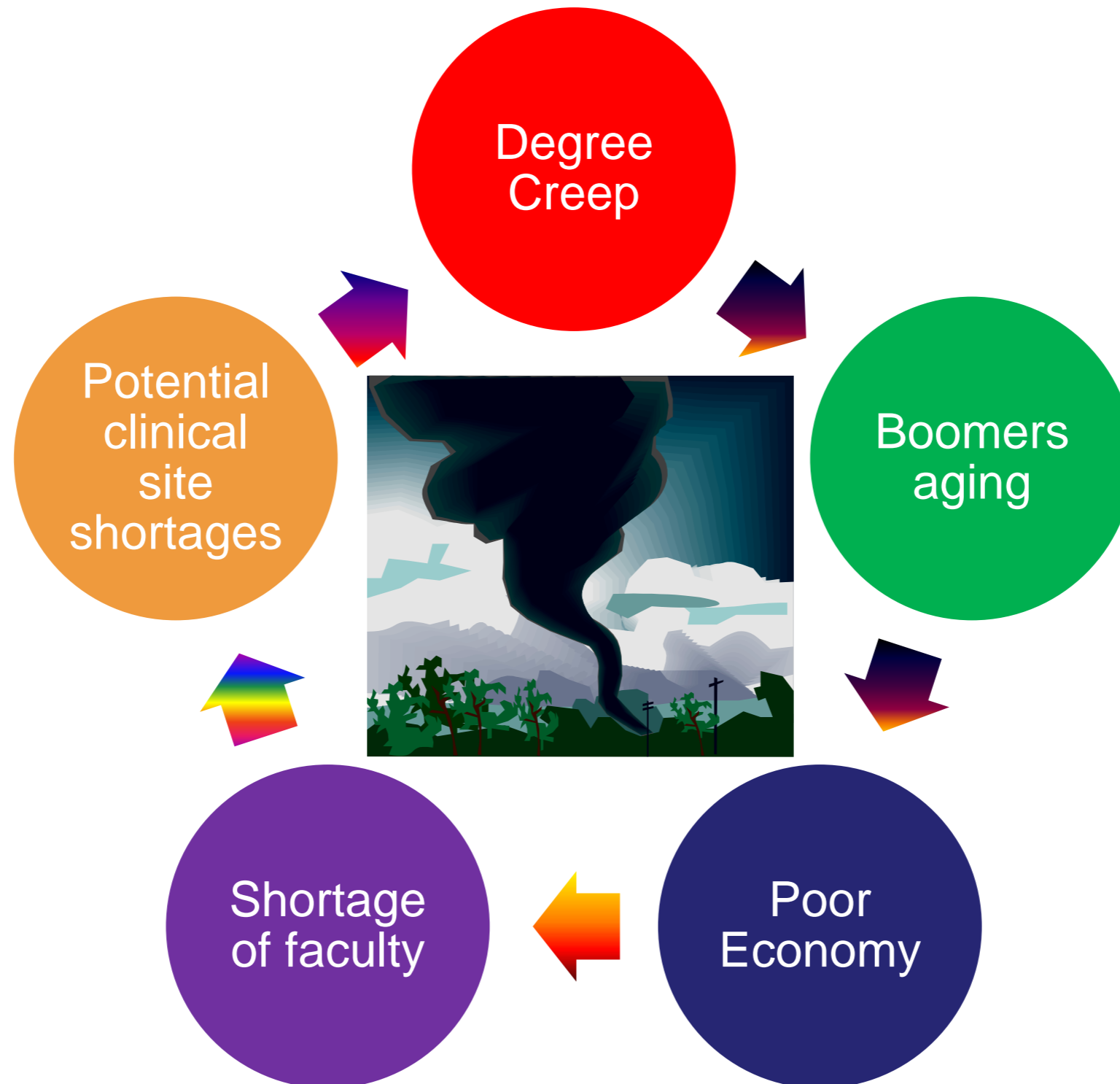
- Perceived increased educational and skill requirements of the profession
- Perceived increased access for patients
- Increased recognition of profession
- Increased salary
- Reimbursement

Source: Dr. Barbara Jones, Degree Creep Presentation . Available on NN2 website

Data to support increased educational requirements in respiratory, nursing, radiological sciences, etc.?



Degree Creep Could Help Create The Perfect Storm



...in ways that the proponents do not foresee



Leading to the slingshot effect...



Real Consequences of Degree Creep

- A lack of qualified faculty to teach baccalaureate programs,
- Lack of faculty in general
- A decline in student and workforce diversity,
- Decreased access to health care in rural areas,
- A decline in job satisfaction and morale if health care workers feel their skills and knowledge are not fully used.
- Decreased access to education in health care
- Increase in cost for healthcare and for hospitals, again, unequally disadvantaging small, rural, and underserved areas.
- Increase in tuition
- Increase in time in college

(Source: Dr. Barbara Jones, 2011)

Real Consequences of Degree Creep, cont.

- Workforce shortages exacerbated
- Lack of capacity in colleges in universities (faculty, facilities, funds, clinical sites)
- Lack of credentialed faculty to deliver instruction
- Decrease in workforce diversity as inaccessible to minorities and economically disadvantaged
- Increase in tuition
- Increase in time in college

Real Consequences of Degree Creep, cont.

- Threaten research
- Cause faculty to “scramble” for degrees, as many faculty members do not have doctoral degrees
- Cause a reduction in the number of new graduates during time of workforce shortage
- Cause only more wealthy to seek degrees because of time and cost
- Create a need for more assistants and technicians
- Create a decline in job satisfaction and morale if advanced skills and knowledge underutilized.

~ Siler, W. & Randolph, D. (2006). A clinical look at clinical doctorates. *The Chronicle Review*

Opportunities/challenges for NN2

- Better monitoring of state legislation especially related to change in educational requirements
- Better communication from NN2 members regarding changes in specific disciplines
- NN2 can create a “legislative communication packet” which members can use to influence their own state legislation
- NN2 needs to create a second position paper outlining negative consequences of degree creep
- NN2 should create a response to the “New York” nursing research paper
- NN2 could create a “2 + 2 Friendly” database of colleges offering completion programs and promote these on the website
- NN2 can continue to encourage lifelong learning, especially in terms of packaging continuing education for advanced skillsets
- NN2 should also be very clear about its continued support of career pathways and progression of pathway degrees

Opportunities/challenges for NN2

Your ideas?

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Resources:

<http://cssrc.us/publications.aspx?id=7450&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

<http://www.communitycollegetimes.com/Pages/Academic-Programs/Community-colleges-concerned-about-degree-creep-.aspx>

<http://respiratory-care-sleep-medicine.advanceweb.com/Student-and-New-Grad-Center/Student-Top-Story/Is-Degree-Creep-Harming-Respiratory-Care.aspx>

