

Respiratory Protection for Occupational Health Nurses

Barbara J. Burgel, RN, PhD, COHN-S, FAAN, Holly Carpenter, RN, BSN, Debra Novak, RN, DSN, Candace Burns, PhD, ARNP, Annette Byrd, RN, MPH, MaryAnn Gruden, CRNP, MSN, NP-C, COHN-S/CM, Ann Lachat, RN, BSN, FAAOHN, COHN-S/CM, Patty Quinlan, MPH, CIH, Deborah Taormina, RN, MS, COHN-S

Background

- The Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report: Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) and Respiratory Protection: Improving Education and Training (2011)
- Seven recommendations to improve OHN Competency in Respiratory Protection (RP), and educate all levels of nurses in respiratory protection
- In December 2011, the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) Grant Committee's Respiratory Protection Working Group and NIOSH/NPPTL (National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory) partnered to form an Advisory Group with representation from the American Board for Occupational Health Nurses (ABOHN), the Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare (AOHP), the American Nurses Association (ANA), and the IOM Standing Committee on Personal Protective Equipment for Workplace Safety and Health
- Focus of the Advisory Group was on IOM Recommendation 1: Conduct a Survey of OHNs

Survey Aims

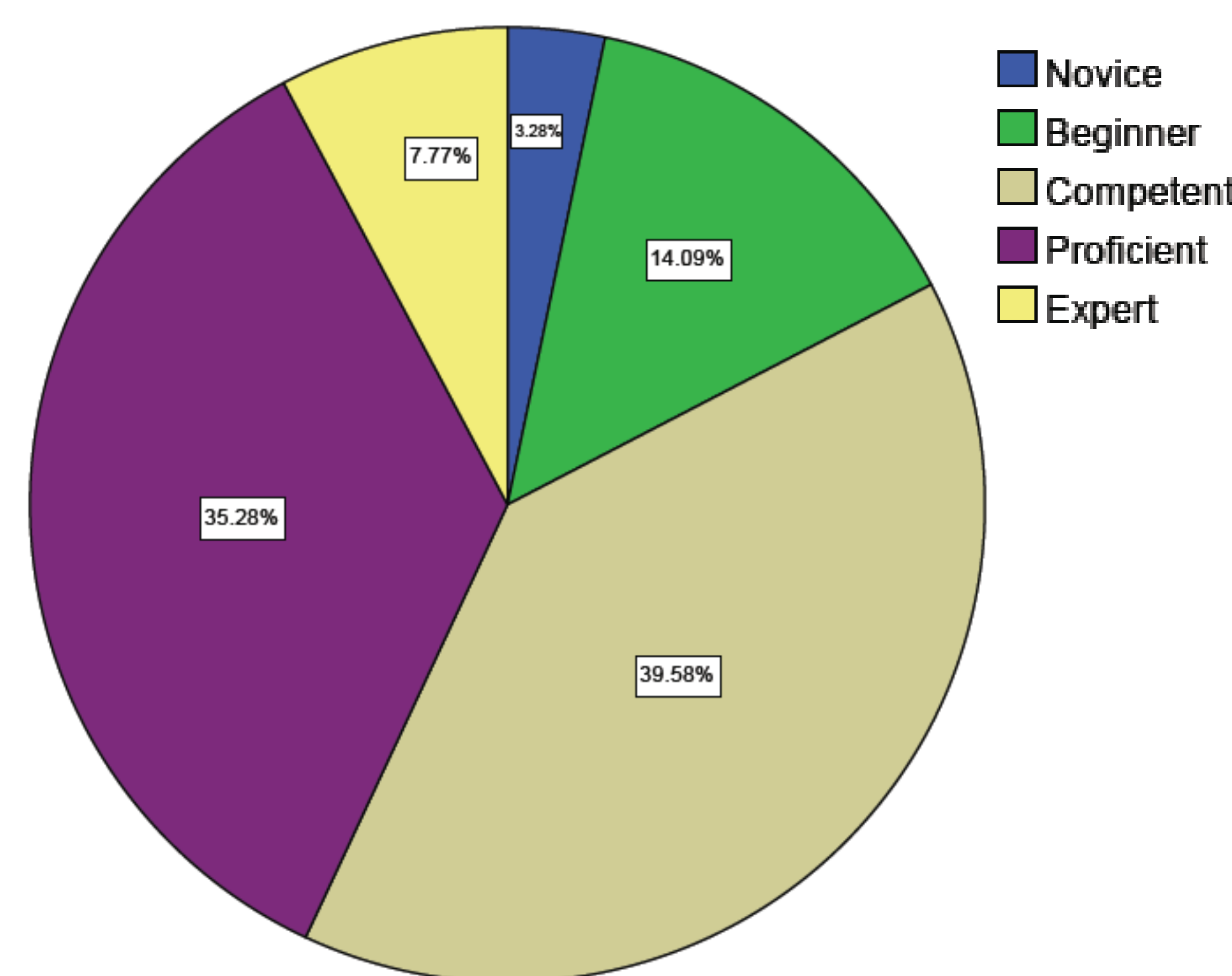
- Conduct a survey to assess current OHN roles, responsibilities, and educational preparation & needs in respiratory protection;
- Determine self-perceived level of expertise in RP (novice, beginner, competent, proficient, and expert) and how OHNs achieve and maintain knowledge and skills in RP;
- Identify how OHNs motivate employees to use respirators appropriately.

Methods

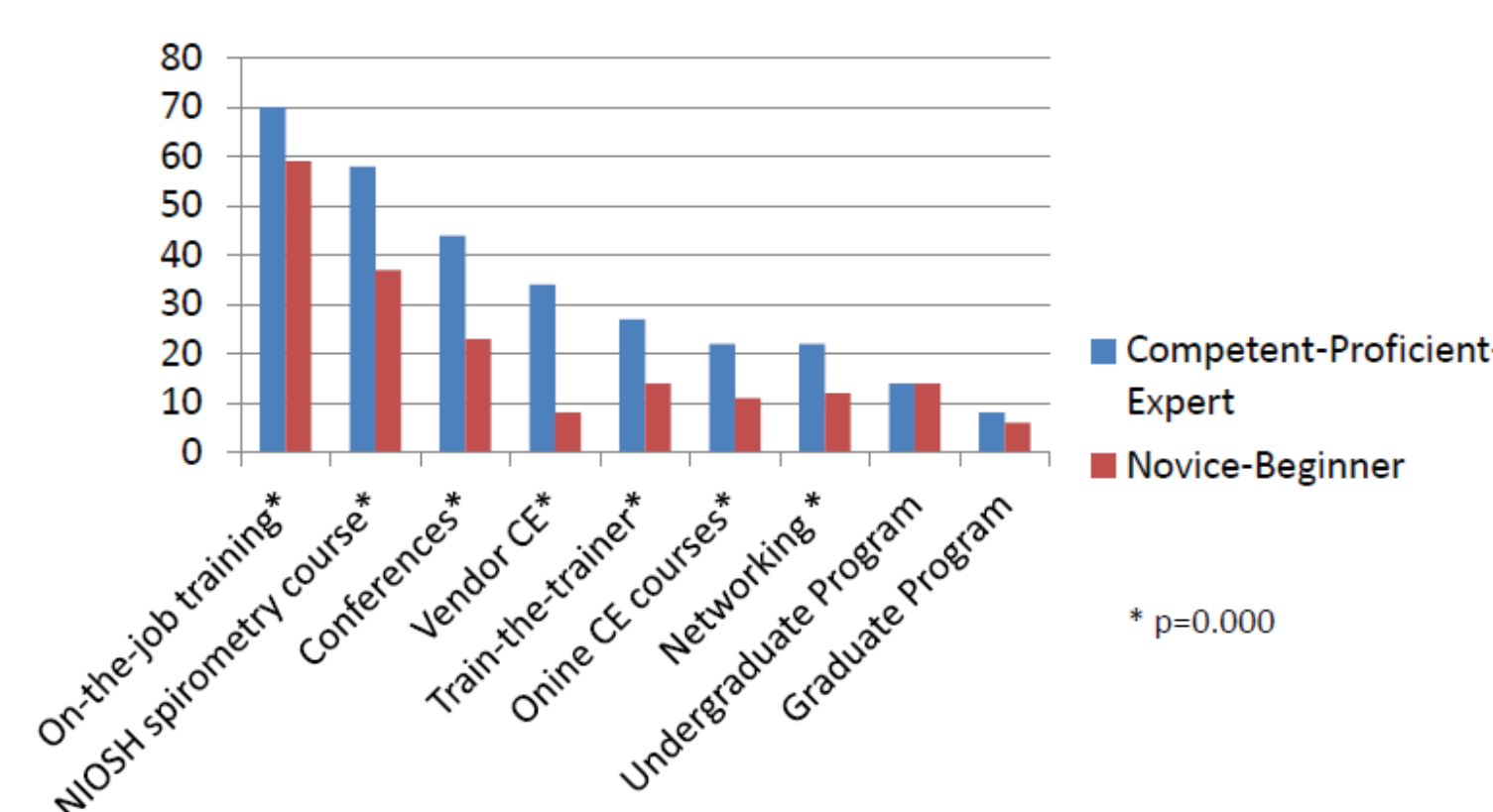
- Survey conducted in June 2012, sampling all members of AAOHN (n=5,183), ABOHN (n=4,926), AOHP, (n=1,000) and ANA members (n=249) who identified occupational health as a specialty area.
- 2,263 responded (>30% response rate from each sample); 2,072 were used in this analysis (who had complete data for competence in RP).

Findings

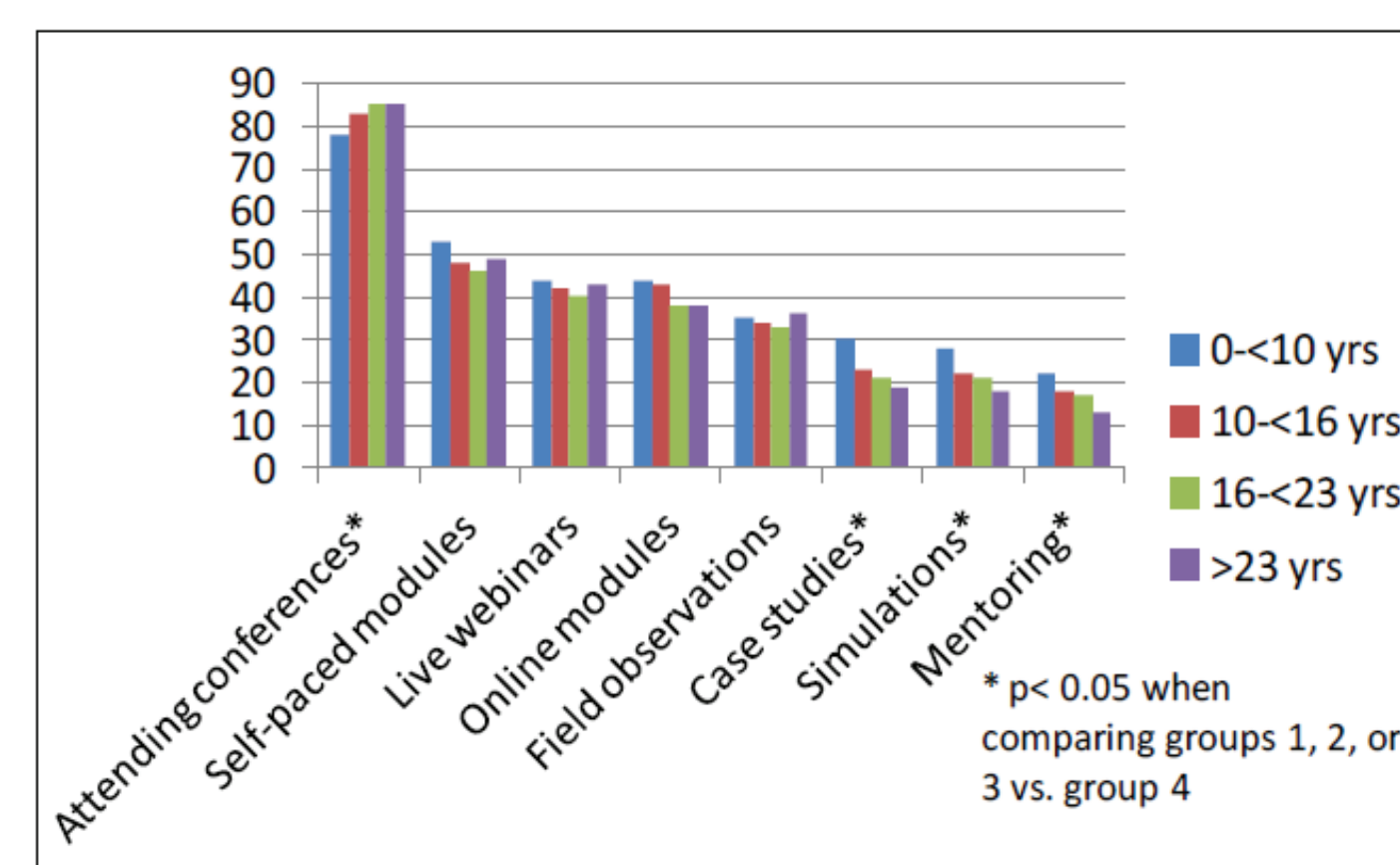
Competence in Respiratory Protection



How OHNs Achieved RP Knowledge, n=2,072



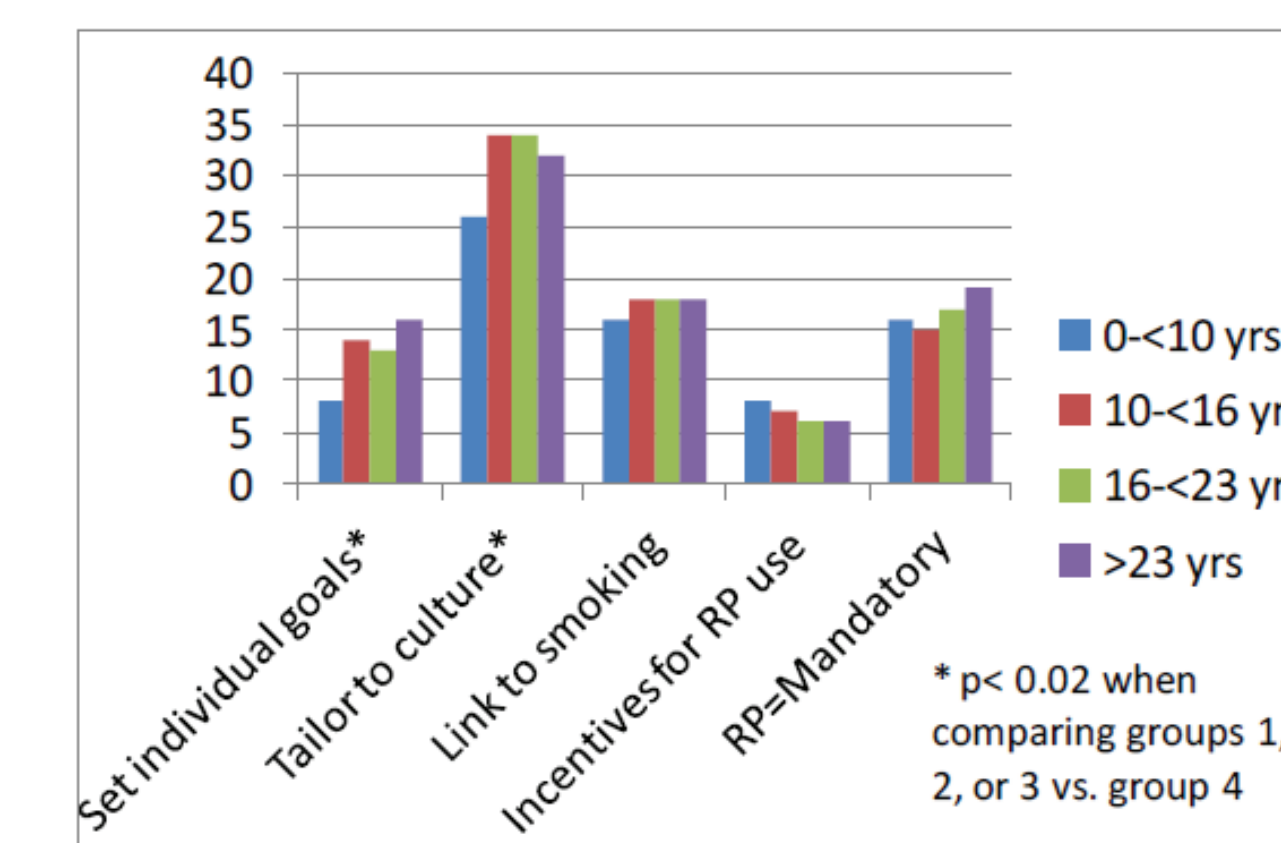
Preferred Methods of Learning by Years of OHN Experience



Selected Demographics (n=2,263)

Mean years of experience (Standard Deviation)	16.8 (9.1)
AAOHN member	73%
AOHP member	17%
ANA member	9%
Certified in Occupational Health Nursing	70%
Working in healthcare sector	35%
OHN Responsible for Respiratory Surveillance Program at their facility	50%

Techniques to Motivate Respiratory Protection (RP) by Years of OHN Experience



Other motivational techniques used:

“It is mandatory in designated areas, subject to discipline for non-compliance up to and including termination.”

“Workers want to wear their respirators”

“Use (the respirator) or die!”

Summary

- 83% of OHNs reported being competent, proficient or expert in RP.
- Years of OHN experience was associated with both comfort and self-perceived RP competency.
- Safety culture was significantly associated with competence and comfort in RP.
- This was a very experienced sample of OHNs who identified OJT as their source of RP knowledge.
- Less experienced OHNs preferred case studies, simulations and mentoring as ways to learn; more experienced nurses preferred conferences.
- More experienced OHNs tailored their education to the culture, and used individual goal setting as motivational strategies.
- These data will be used to tailor respiratory protection education for OHNs.