



Certified Tactical Paramedic: A Benchmark for Competency in Austere and Hostile Environments

John R. Clark, JD, MBA, NRP, FP-C, CCP-C, CFC, CMTE

For over 500 years, physicians of Venice were required to attend annual refresher courses in anatomy to ensure that they were “certified” to practice medicine in the city.¹ Today, certification serves the important independent purpose of identifying for the public, state licensure agencies, military commanders, and employers the individuals who have successfully obtained a higher level of education and demonstrated their knowledge, skills, and abilities in mandated examinations.

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) has defined *certification* as “a process, often voluntary, by which individuals who have demonstrated the level of knowledge and skill required in the profession, occupation, role, or skill are identified to the public and other stakeholders.”² Certification establishes uniform standards for training and a valid, uniform process to assess the knowledge and skills required for competent practice required by professionals throughout their careers. Specialty certification in the paramedic community ensures that safe and effective care is provided to the public by way of an examination that is legally defensible and psychometrically sound.³ Within the paramedic community, there are three specialty certification examinations to assess this higher level of competency—Certified Flight Paramedic, Certified Critical Care Paramedic, and the new Certified Tactical Paramedic.

A paramedic license establishes a baseline competence in a broad area, while specialty certification is the recognition of mastery of a more specific area of medical practice. The assured validity of the certification process is the only way that the public can place any faith in the process that is designed to ensure clinicians are academically prepared to be experts in their specialty area and that, as a result, the public is protected from harm.

Paramedic practice in the United States is a fragmented hodge-podge of state-mandated regulatory schemes that vary in scope of practice in some places even to the county or service level. After obtaining licensure as a paramedic,

specialty certification for Critical Care Paramedics, Flight Paramedics, and Tactical Paramedics is provided by the Board for Critical Care Transport Paramedic Certification (BCCTPC®) as a specialty certification examination process. The BCCTPC is a nonprofit organization responsible for the administration and development of the FP-C® and CCP-C® exams. The mission of the BCCTPC is to improve paramedic practice by providing a certification exam that is an objective, fair, and honest validation of critical care paramedic knowledge.⁴

The BCCTPC Certified Tactical Paramedic (TP-C®) specialty exam certification was designed to allow instant recognition that the paramedic demonstrated a certain level of knowledge and competency following a request from the U.S. Special Operations Command to develop a certification exam for paramedics who primarily operate in a tactical medical environment.

Working with subject matter experts in the tactical medicine community from across the United States, in both civilian and military sectors, the BCCTPC has developed the exam to measure competency of paramedics operating in austere and hostile environments. Based on a 2012 Job Analysis Study, the TP-C exam blueprint outlines the skills critical to the TEMS provider and the frequency at which those skills are used. During the exam development process, the BCCTPC worked closely with the National TEMS Initiative and Council (NTIC) to make certain the ongoing efforts for a standardized tactical paramedic curriculum and national exam were conducted in parallel, ensuring the TP-C exam mirrors the competency domains established through the NTIC. The BCCTPC also follows the CoTCCC and C-TECC guidelines, the USSOCOM Tactical Trauma Protocols,⁵ and various other standard-of-care guidelines for prehospital and critical care provision to ensure all examination materials correctly reflect “best practices.”

For more information about the Certified Tactical Paramedic exam or the BCCTPC, visit www.bcctpc.org.

References

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Mr. Clark is the chief operating officer for BCCTPC and legal advisor and member of the board of directors for the International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics (IAFCCP).



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