



What is a CRA? What does it take to become one? What do you get when you hire one?

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The Certified Radiology Administrator (CRA) program is now entering its 7th year. From 2002 until today, the exam has been taken 1002 times and has been passed 701 times. For an overall pass rate of 70.0%.

Why do individuals seek the CRA designation? They *take* the CRA exam for any number of reasons. Earning professional recognition, attaining personal satisfaction, enhancing employment opportunities, and presenting a model of achievement for one's employees and others in the profession of imaging administration are many of the reasons given by current CRAs. What does it take to become a CRA?

A common belief is that becoming a CRA is merely the act of qualifying for, taking, and passing the certification examination. That's true, but what does that really mean and what does it take to pass the examination? This is a question that comes from people who haven't taken the exam and wonder if they're ready. It's a question that also comes from the 27.5% of people who have not been successful in their first attempts to earn the CRA designation. It's even a question that comes from some of the over 600 individuals who have become CRAs!

The Radiology Administration Certification Commission (RACC) oversees and administers the CRA certification program. The RACC recently completed an internal application/test result audit to help in its duty to guide the CRA program to a successful future. The results, while not surprising, will, we think, be of interest to anyone who may wonder what it takes to pass the CRA exam and earn the CRA designation.

Notes on the Sample

The following data was collected from a random sample of 20% of all CRA applications from July 2002 (the inaugural CRA exam) through the November 2007 exam. Examinees that retook the exam were only counted once and their data was collected as of their most recent exam administration.

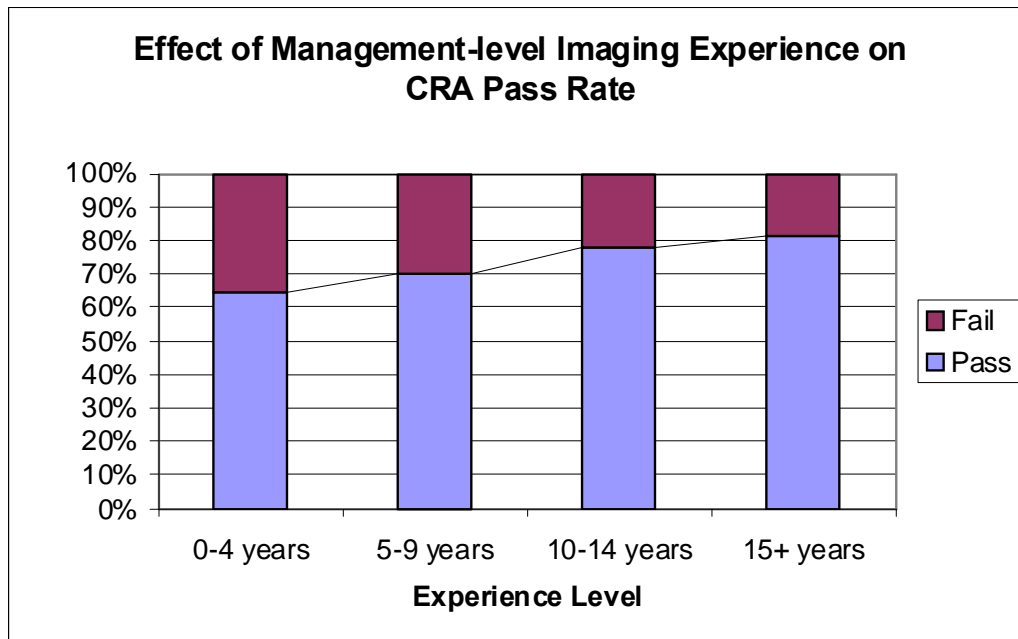
Because the CRA exam prerequisites to sit for the exam require 7 points earned through activities as outlined on the exam application (a combination of education, certification, and experience), the bias is towards underreporting activities beyond that 7 point threshold. This fact should be kept in mind when reviewing and interpreting the data that follows.

Experience and Education

Quite simply, when it comes to passing the CRA exam and being designated as a CRA, both experience and education matter.

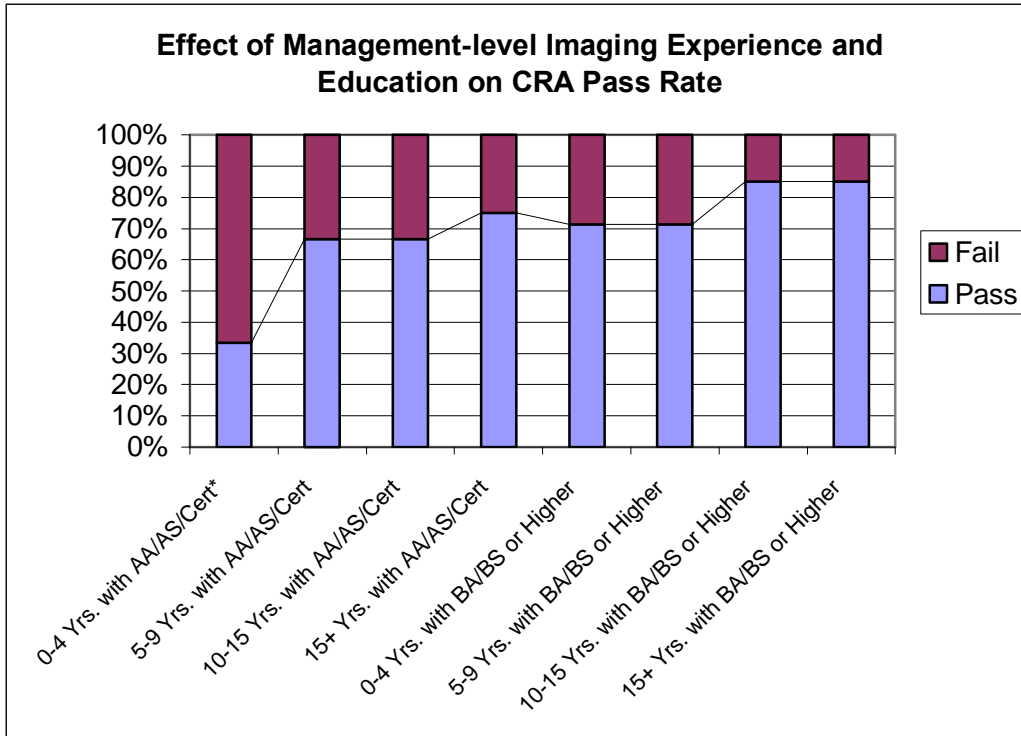
In our study, we found a very strong correlation between applicants' reported years of management level imaging experience (as defined in the application process) and

their pass rate. Applicants from the sample with 15 or more years of reported experience have a pass rate 17 percentage points higher than those reporting 0-4 years experience!



Add education to the mix, and it becomes clear that both experience and education play key roles in preparing an applicant to pass the CRA exam.

Interestingly, especially for those who have worked their way up within the industry, there does appear to be a point where those with less education and more experience have higher pass rates than those with more education but less experience. From our sample data, the “cross point” is around 15 years of experience, but this should only be used as a loose guide, given the bias toward underreporting on applications as discussed earlier.



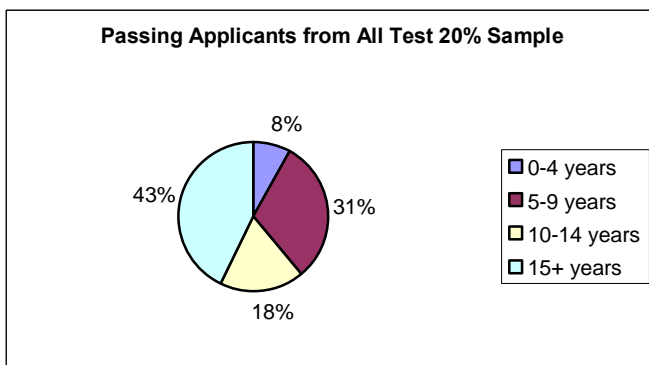
*Note: because of the small sample size, the 0-4 Years/Associate or Certificate data should be used for directional purposes only.

Who are the CRAs?

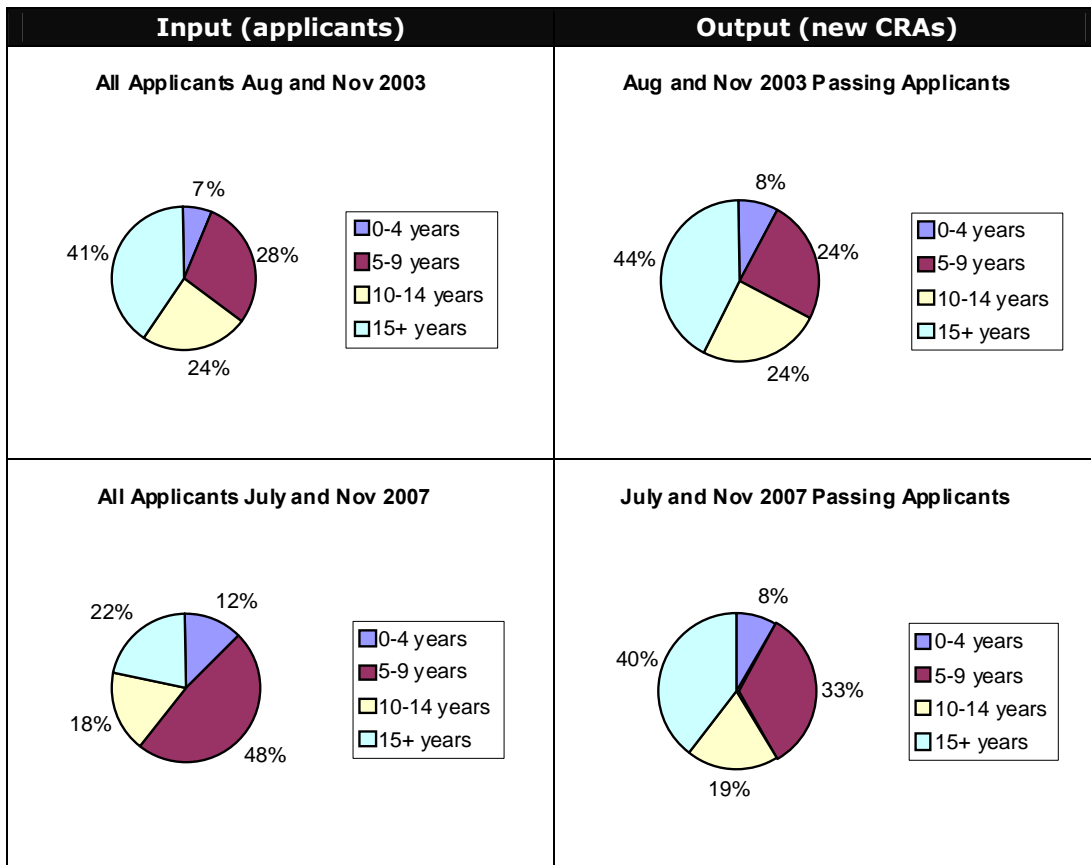
You may be asking yourself, now that you know who is statistically more or less likely to pass the CRA exam, just what does this say about the individuals who have taken and passed the examination and who have earned the CRA designation?

Maybe you're even wondering whether you are ready to take the CRA exam if you've only been in imaging management for 4 or 5 years. First off, rest assured that people with less than 15 years of experience do pass the CRA exam!

The output of new CRAs from our 20% sample, with respect to experience, looks like this:



Further, that new CRA profile remains fairly consistent. For example, a deeper look at all applicants for the August and November 2003 exams and for the July and November 2007 exams reveals a similar "look" in the new CRA category, despite very different applicant profiles:



What does all this mean for you and the CRA program?

The above information is good news for and validation of the CRA program! Individuals who have been honing their skills for years are more likely to pass the CRA exam than those who are newer to the profession. If advanced education is added to the mix, their chances are even better. Yet a number of those with the least experience and/or education have still been able to “prove their mettle” and become CRAs, separating themselves from other administrators equally new to the profession or with equal levels of education.

For those of you who are thinking about sitting for the CRA exam, this data will help you better understand what it takes to become a CRA. Particularly if you have less experience or have not completed as much higher education, you can take that into account in preparing for the exam, perhaps spending extra time preparing for areas you are less knowledgeable about and/or asking a current CRA to mentor you in the process.

And, for those of you who are CRAs and those of you who are considering hiring CRAs or making your position “CRA preferred” or even “CRA required,” you can rest assured that the data supports what you already know: CRA certification *succeeds* as a means for individuals to indicate that they have met the standards of an impartial, nationally recognized certifying organization established to test and certify the individual’s understanding of the medical imaging industry.

Does having a CRA or hiring an individual who is a CRA guarantee success? Of course not. Nothing can guarantee an individual's success in today's healthcare industry. With the ever changing focus of governmental regulation and oversight, human relations issues and constraints, issues of diversity, technological change, market changes, etc, nothing is certain. Does it mean that the person with the CRA will always get the job? Again, of course not. A blend of education, experience, style, compatibility, and being the right person for the job will be the deciding factors. However, we believe it does mean that an individual with a CRA designation will have the knowledge and background to hit the ground running when hired and will certainly require less training in that they have demonstrated, by way of gaining the CRA designation, that they have a clear understanding of the medical imaging industry. More job descriptions for medical imaging managers and administrators are specifying "CRA preferred" or "CRA required." As stated by Olga Smith Zakharenko, MD in a recent article, "[the] bottom line is that if you want to be viewed as a candidate who can deliver results more than others, the CRA certification is critical."