Characteristics and Contributions of Physician Assistants/Associates Practicing in Psychiatry

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Background

- A large proportion of the US population suffers from mental illness and the limited access to psychiatrists significantly contributes to the underuse of mental health services.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the psychiatric workforce shortage. Physician assistants/associates (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) can be used to address the gap between psychiatrists and access to mental health care.
- Little is known about the size, practice characteristics and contributions of the psychiatry PA workforce.

Objective & Method

- The study’s objective was to quantify demographic, practice, and other important personal/professional characteristics of Board Certified PAs practicing in psychiatry.
- Data derived from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) PA Professional Profile.
- NCCPA data from 2021 included responses from 111,628 PAs who provided or updated their information or certified that their responses were up to date within the past three years.
- We compared demographic and practice characteristics of PAs practicing in psychiatry (n=2,283) vs. PAs in all other specialties (n=109,166).
- Analysis of the data consisted of descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses (Chi-square and Mann Whitney U tests).

Email questions to Kasey Puckett at kaseyk@nccpa.net

Key Findings and Conclusion

- PAs in psychiatry, when compared to all other specialties, are more likely to be female (71.4% vs. 69.1%, p<0.015), less than 30 years old (15.0% vs. 11.6%, p<0.01), and reside in the South (43.8% vs. 34.1%, p<0.001).
- Majority of PAs in psychiatry (86.6%) are satisfied with their present position, and 68.1% report no symptoms of burnout.
- The self-reported income distribution by PAs for 2021 is similar for those in psychiatry and all other specialties.

PA characteristics in psychiatry:

- PA's in psychiatry are slightly more racially diverse than PAs in all other specialties. Other includes those who selected “other” Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native.

References

- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7444565/
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7630782/

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