The Important Role and Contributions of Physician Assistants/Associates in Hospital Settings

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Key Findings and Conclusion

- The percentage of PAs practicing in hospital settings has grown by 14% from 2013 to 2022.
- PAs are increasingly shifting away from working in office-based private practices to hospital settings.
- Despite PAs in hospital settings vs. all other settings being more likely to report one or more burnout symptoms (34.0% vs. 31.0%, p<0.001), they were equally satisfied with their positions (83.4% vs. 83.7%, p=0.169).
- PAs in hospital settings provide indispensable services, including diagnosing, treating, and managing patients with acute conditions, conducting physical examinations, and obtaining medical histories, ordering, performing, and interpreting lab tests and diagnostic studies, performing procedures, and providing care conditions.
- PAs practicing in hospital settings were less likely to retire in 5 years compared to all other practice settings (4.3% vs. 6.8%, p<0.001).
- A better understanding of the utilization of PAs in hospital settings can inform more precise workforce planning and projections.
- There is great potential for greater use and integration of PAs to meet hospital staffing needs to deliver accessible, affordable, and quality care.

References


Background

- Demand for health services is skyrocketing given the number of insured patients, the aging population with multiple comorbidities, and the availability of new therapies, procedures, and treatments.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating health workforce shortages putting immense strain on hospitals throughout the US.
- Overcoming health workforce challenges such as staffing shortages in hospital settings is more important now than ever.
- The PA profession was created to help fill care gaps and extend the availability of healthcare services for patients.

Objective & Method

- The study’s objective was to characterize the Board Certified PA workforce engaged in providing care to patients in hospital settings and quantify their contributions.
- Data were derived from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) PA Professional Profile data.
- NCCPA data from 2022 included responses from 117,465 PAs who provided or updated their information or certified that their responses were up to date within the past three years and shared their practice setting.
- We compared demographic, practice, and other important attributes of PAs practicing in hospitals (n=48,943) vs. other settings (n=68,522).
- Analysis of the data consisted of descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses conducted using SPSS.

Results

- **Burnout Symptoms (p<0.001)**
  - Yes: 51.1% vs. 52.1% in all other settings.
  - No: 48.9% vs. 47.9% in all other settings.
- **Highest Degree Obtained (p<0.001)**
  - Masters: 41.4% vs. 38.7% in all other settings.
  - Doctorate: 15.4% vs. 17.2% in all other settings.
- **Place of Employment Hiring/Recruiting (p<0.001)**
  - Yes: 44.6% vs. 40.8% in all other settings.

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References


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