Characteristics of Physician Associate Hospitalists

Mirela Bruza-Augatis, PhD, PA-C1, James F. Cawley, MPH, PA-C, DHL(hon)2 Roderick S. Hooker, PhD, MBA, PA, Andrzej Kozikowski, PhD3, and Kasey Puckett, MPH4

1National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants
2University of Maryland Baltimore

Background

○ The need for physician assistants/associates (PAs) in hospital settings is growing, and it has become a crucial component of healthcare delivery. PAs are individuals who are licensed in some states to provide a wide range of healthcare services and are often employed by hospitals to help meet the demand for healthcare services.

○ Our study was designed to assess the characteristics of PAs providing care in hospital medicine, their work context, and how they are employed.

○ The study was conducted using data from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) PA Professional Profile database. The study included data from 1,114,390 PAs who provided updated or verified information about their work context.

Method

○ The study’s objective was to describe the demographics, job satisfaction, and burnout levels of PAs working in hospital medicine, their roles, where they work, and how they are employed.

○ Data were derived from the NCCPA PA Professional Profile database. The study included data from 2012, and the sample size was 1,114,390 PAs (70.3% response rate).

○ The study used descriptive and exploratory statistical analyses to compare the characteristics of PAs working in hospital medicine with those working in other specialties.

Results

Income Ranges of PAs in Hospital Medicine Compared to PAs in All Other Specialties (p<0.001)

- The median income of PAs in hospital medicine was $91,000, compared to $80,000 for all other specialties.
- PAs in hospital medicine had a higher income range (between $120,000 and $140,000), compared to all other specialties (between $90,000 and $110,000).
- The difference in income range was statistically significant (p<0.001).

Job Satisfaction (p=0.036)

- PAs in hospital medicine were more satisfied with their jobs compared to those in other specialties (16.0% vs. 14.8%).

- PAs in hospital medicine were more satisfied with their job satisfaction compared to those in other specialties.

- The satisfaction levels were higher in hospital medicine compared to other specialties.

- The difference in satisfaction levels was statistically significant (p<0.001).

Burnout (p<0.001)

- PAs in hospital medicine were less likely to report symptoms of burnout compared to those in other specialties.
- The burnout rates were lower in hospital medicine compared to other specialties.
- The difference in burnout rates was statistically significant (p<0.001).

Key Findings and Conclusion

- PAs practicing hospital medicine were younger (median age, 36 vs. 39; p=0.001) and female (73.4% vs. 66.9%; p<0.001) when compared to those practicing in other specialties.
- The highest proportion of PAs in hospital medicine were located in the Northeast (36.7%) and urban settings (93.3%).
- Almost two-thirds (63.9%) of PA hospitalists had been certified for less than 10 years.
- Majority (91.6%) report working over 30 hours weekly and see fewer than 40 patients per week (43.5%).
- PAs in hospital medicine are more likely to report working in a secondary position, whether it is in a clinical, educational, research, or administrative role, compared to those in other disciplines (18.7% vs. 15.1%; p=0.001).
- Hospitalist PAs were slightly more likely to report planning to leave their principal clinical position in the next 12 months than PAs in all other specialties (9.4% vs. 7.7%; p=0.001).
- As the number of hospital beds grows, the growth and availability of PAs in hospital medicine make them a part of the strategy to meet the demand for specialized service delivery.
- Defining the role of the PA as a hospitalist requires more research about the range of services, outcomes of care, and efficiency of labor.

References


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