Current Trends and Characteristics of U.S. PA-Specific Doctoral Programs

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Background and Objectives

Background:
- PA-specific doctoral programs have gained traction in the U.S. over the past decade. 1-3
- Little is known about their structure and outcomes. Primary goals include enhancing knowledge and skills to advance the PA career in clinical, leadership, education and scholarship.
- Scholarly work improves job satisfaction and well-being for PAs.

Objectives:
- Investigate the trends and characteristics of the currently available PA-specific doctoral programs.
- Examine the delivery of research and scholarly education in these programs.

Methodology

- A mixed-methods study involving qualitative analysis and website searches for the characteristics of PA-specific doctoral programs.
- Data were triangulated by examining each program’s public website and promotional materials.
- When data unavailable, information was requested via e-mail.
- 24 programs were identified & examined.

Results

- Prominent concentrations/tracks: advanced clinical practice, leadership, education, public or global health.
- Research related coursework ranged from 0-22 credit hours (mean 30.16%, median 33.33% of total credit hours).
- There was significant variation in course titles, course descriptions, and expected outcomes across programs.

Conclusions

- PA doctoral education is growing rapidly with the majority of currently available programs emphasizing leadership, academia, and clinical practice advancement.
- Researchers became aware of 2 new programs after analyzing the data.
- Although research was stated as a goal for many programs, there is a lack of consistency in the delivery of this curricular element.
- Future studies should correlate this data with graduate outcomes.

References