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COVID-19 and US PA workforce

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Disclosures

No relevant disclosures

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The COVID-19 pandemic, job postings and employment trends among US physician associates. The Covid-19 impact study



Research Activities

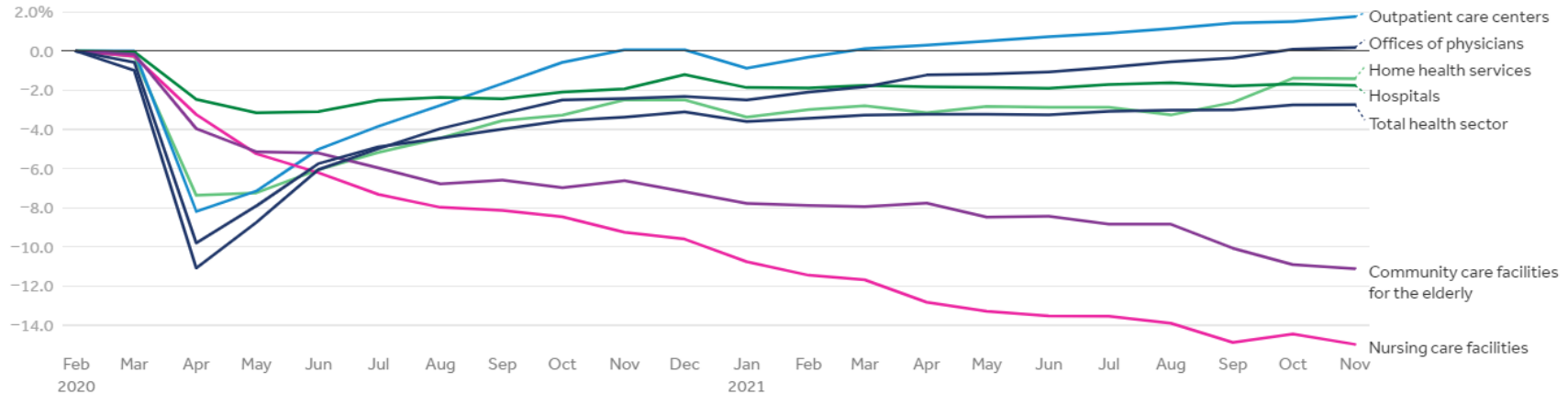
Learning Objectives

By the end the session you should be able to ...

- Discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the health care workforce
- Describe trends in job postings & employment of US PAs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Compare & contrast employment trends of PAs, NPs, and the general health care sector.
- Identify key lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic & implications for PA value in the US health care system

Pandemic Impact on Health Employment

Cumulative % change in health sector employment by setting, since February 2020, seasonally adjusted



Note: Data for October and November 2021 are preliminary.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Survey (CES) • [Get the data](#) • PNG

Why is this topic important for PAs?

- Health care jobs have been considered recession-proof for decades but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall employment in health care dropped significantly.
- The pandemic has led to redeployments, furloughs, and provider deaths.
- This disruption provides a unique window to assess the dynamic role of PAs, skills demand and how PAs can step up to provide high quality care during conditions of national emergencies such as pandemics.

Key Research Questions

- What were the job posting trends and demand for PAs during the COVID-19 pandemic across various states in the U.S?
- In which medical specialties were PAs most wanted?
- How did PA job posting trends compare with NPs, and MDs during the pandemic?
- How did the demand for these providers look like in individual states when the COVID 19 surge was at its highest?
- Was there an association between job posting trends and state scope-of practices laws?

Purpose/Objective

- To assess trends in job postings and employment of PAs in comparison to NPs and the health care sector in the US.
- The long-term goal of this study is to demonstrate PA value in healthcare systems using novel labor analytics.

Description/Methodology

- Secondary analysis of national data from federal government surveys, including aggregate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (payroll data), monthly employment data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), and Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker.



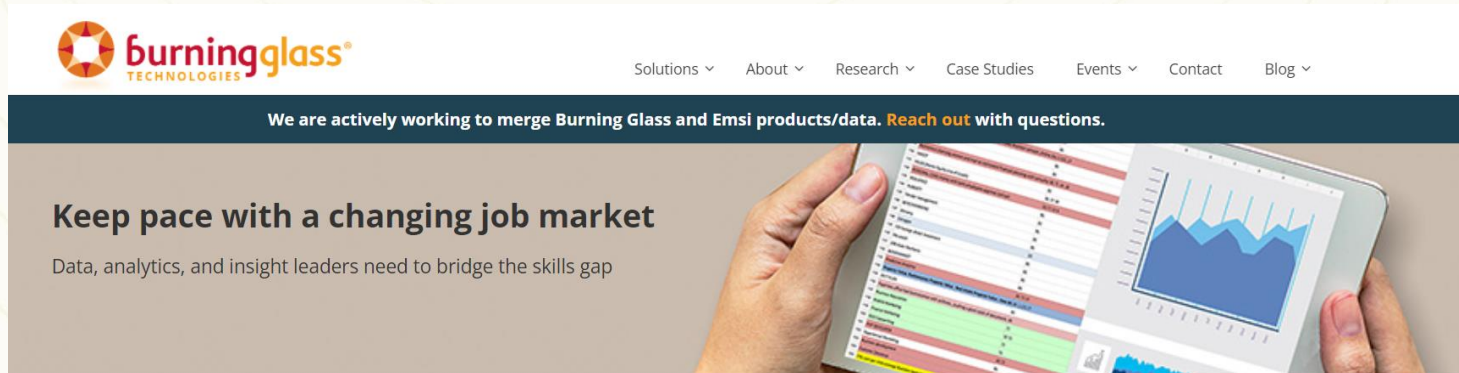
U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS



Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

Description/Methodology

- To gain insights into job posting trends and demand for PAs during the COVID-19 pandemic, we utilized online job postings data from the labor analytics firm Emsi Burning Glass Technologies (BGT). Job posting and employment trends of PAs during the pandemic were compared with NPs, and the general health care sector



The image shows a screenshot of the Burning Glass Technologies website banner. At the top left is the logo for Burning Glass Technologies, which consists of a stylized orange and red starburst icon followed by the text "burningglass" in a bold, sans-serif font, with "TECHNOLOGIES" in a smaller font below it. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with the following items: "Solutions", "About", "Research", "Case Studies", "Events", "Contact", and "Blog", each followed by a small downward-pointing chevron icon. Below the navigation menu is a dark blue horizontal bar with white text that reads: "We are actively working to merge Burning Glass and Emsi products/data. Reach out with questions." Below this bar is a large image of a person's hands holding a tablet. The tablet screen displays a data visualization consisting of a table with multiple columns and rows of data, and a blue area chart overlaid on the right side of the table. The chart shows a fluctuating trend over time. The background of the banner is a light gray color.

burningglass
TECHNOLOGIES

Solutions ▾ About ▾ Research ▾ Case Studies Events ▾ Contact Blog ▾

We are actively working to merge Burning Glass and Emsi products/data. **Reach out** with questions.

Keep pace with a changing job market

Data, analytics, and insight leaders need to bridge the skills gap

Description/Methodology

- In addition to secondary data analysis, critical appraisal of the literature was conducted using major English databases such as MEDLINE (PubMed), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL), EMBASE, Cochrane, PsychInfo, SocIndex, PROSPERO, Scopus, and google scholar. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and present the study findings.



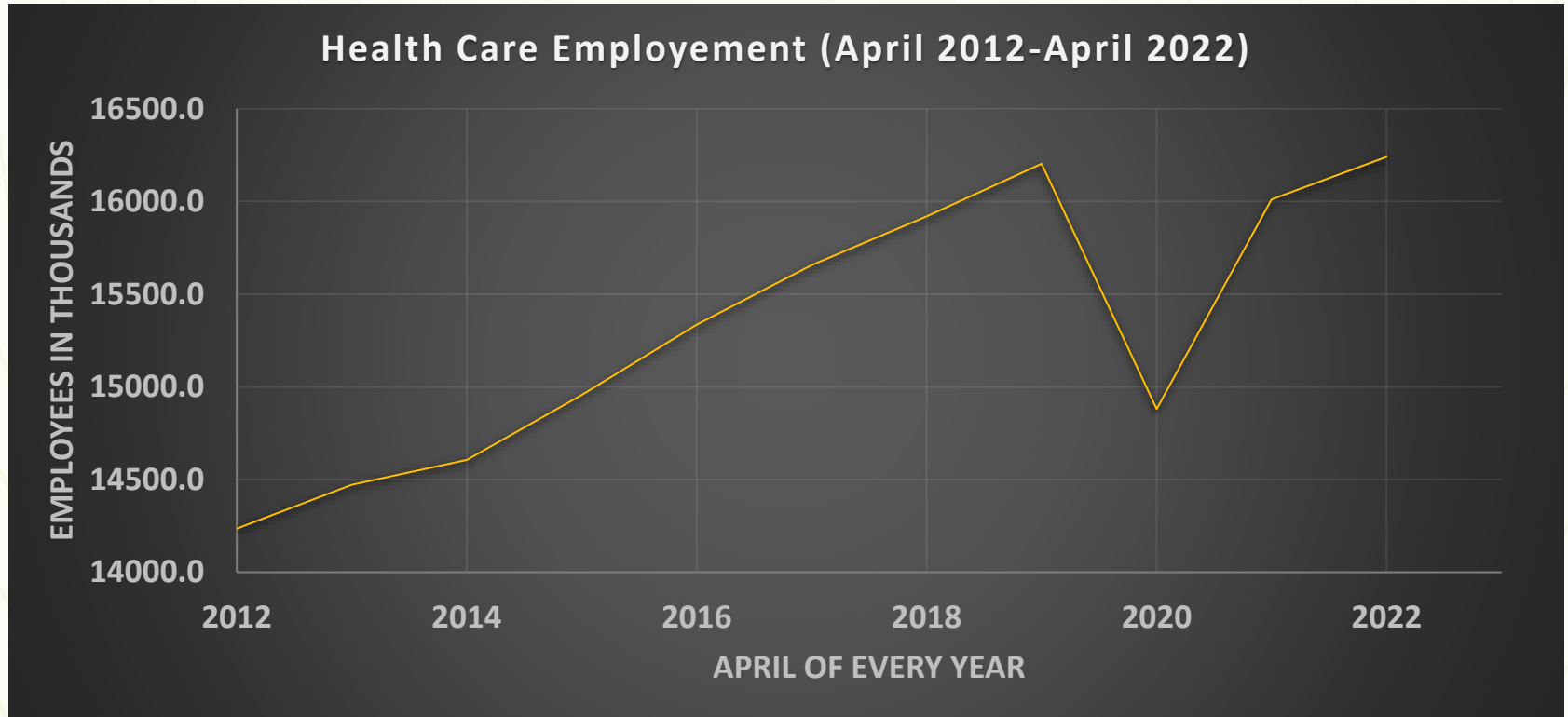
Screening

Eligibility

Inclusion/Appraisal

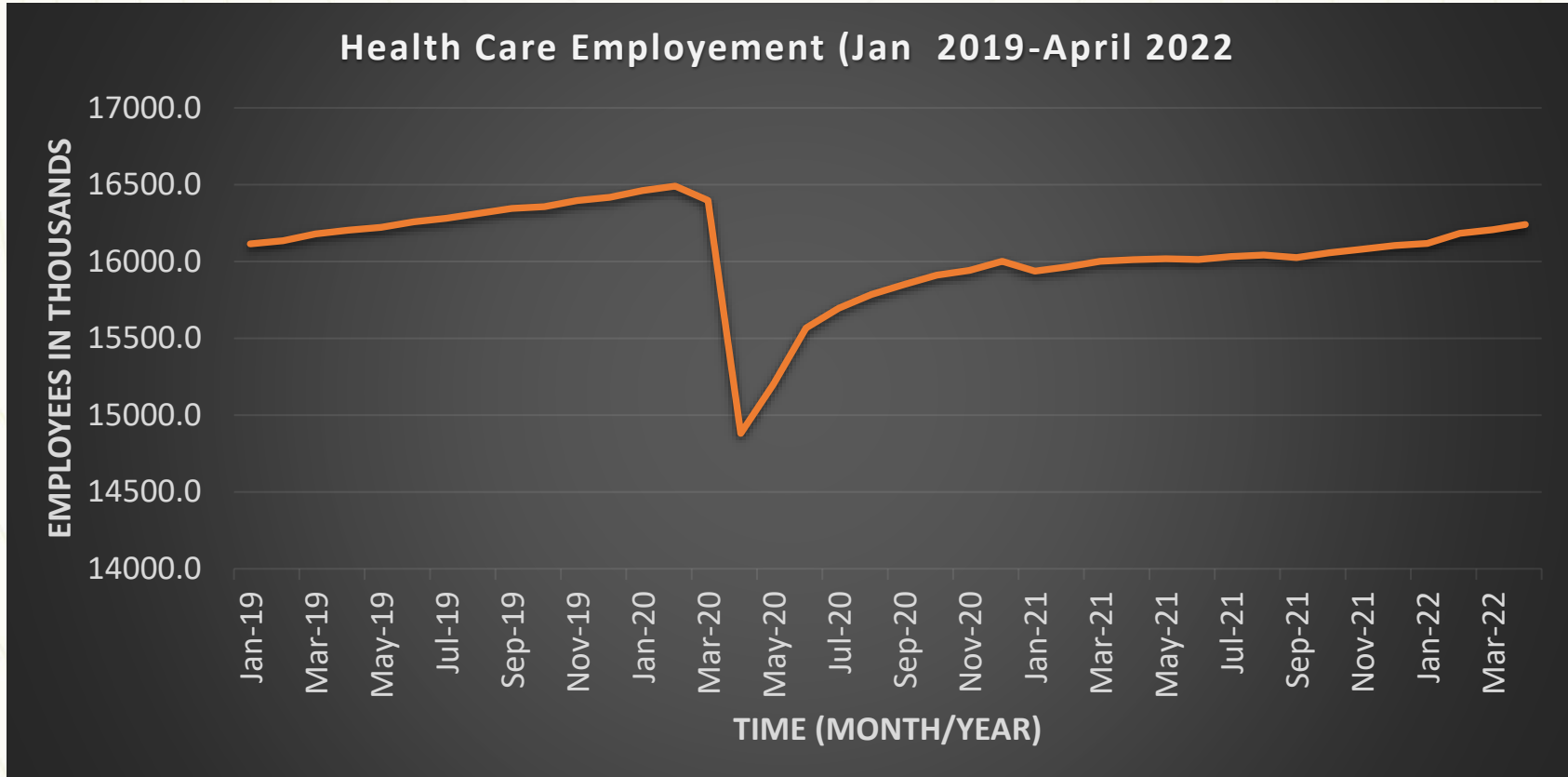
Results

Pandemic Impact on Health Employment



Raw Data from BLS

Pandemic Impact on Health Employment



There was a sharp decline in overall health care employment. By April 2020, health sector employment fell by 9.3% from the previous month, while non-health employment fell by over 14%. Employment drop occurred most in physician offices (-11 percent).



-9.3% Health Sector

-14% Non-Health Sector

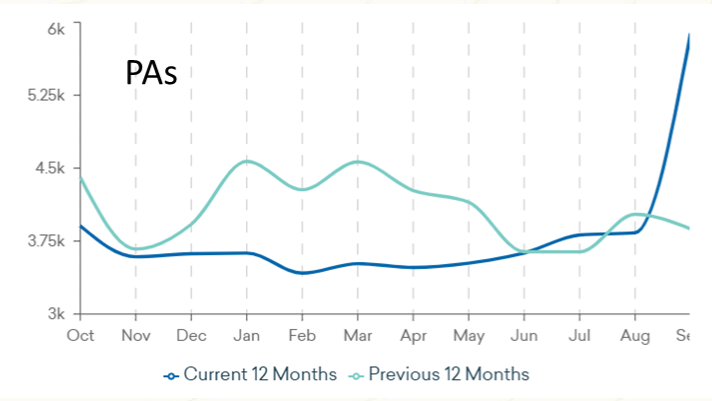
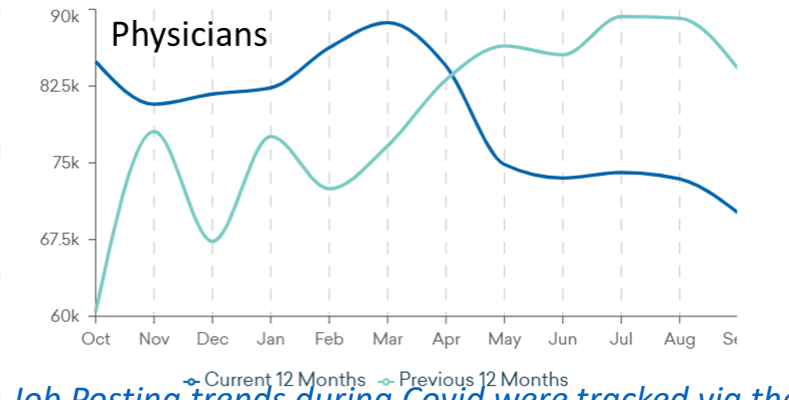
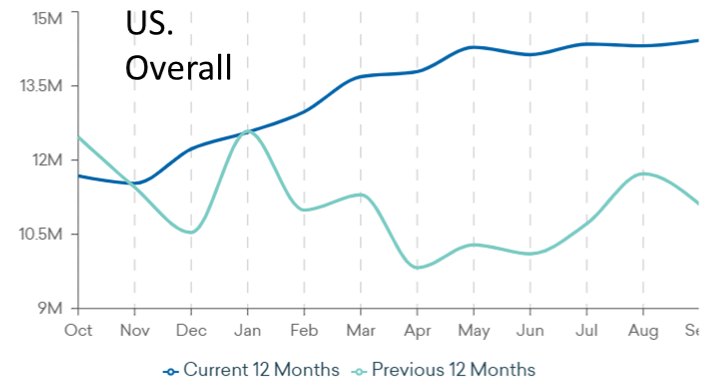
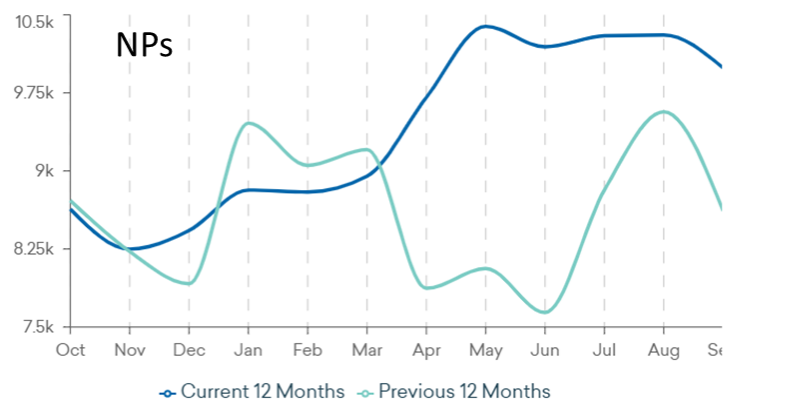
-11% Employment drop in Physician offices

Annual Employment PAs vs NPs:

For PAs, the total annual employments have not declined significantly since 2019 **but the rate of growth slowed** down in 2020 and improved in 2021.

For NP, the total annual employments declined in 2020 by 3% but improved in 2021 beyond pre-pandemic levels.

U.S Job posting trends



Job Posting trends during Covid were tracked via the Emsi Dashboard - Emsi (economicmodeling.com) As of 10/27/2021

Job postings: .

By April 2020, health sector job postings decreased by 25% while all job postings combined (health and non-health) fell by 34%.

According to Emsi Burning Glass Technologies data, job postings for PAs and NPs decreased by 24% and 21% respectively by April 2020. Job postings have since recovered beyond pre-pandemic levels.

Job postings (By April 2020): .

- 
- 34% Drop Non-Health Sector Job Postings
 - 25% Drop in Health Sector Job Postings
 - 24% Drop in PA Job Postings
 - 21% Drop in NP Job Posting

Discussion/Conclusion

- The COVID-19 pandemic led to redeployments, furloughs, and provider deaths.
- The pandemic caused a sharp decline in the overall health care employment, but the PA profession was on average more resilient than other professions.
- Employment and job posting trends for PAs have recovered beyond pre-pandemic levels.

Discussion/Conclusion

- This study used secondary payroll data and online job postings to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the PA workforce.
- We found that the PA profession was on average more resilient than other health and non-health professions.

Discussion/Conclusion

- PAs are trained as generalists with flexibility to switch between medical specialties. So, it is possible that during the pandemic many PAs were temporarily furloughed and or redeployed in other critical areas as opposed leaving employment completely.
- Furthermore, many PAs may be employed in practice areas that were less affected by COVID-19

Bottom Line

- Based employment data and job positing tends pre and post covid, PAs are on demand, provide great value to healthcare and their generalist training and flexibility could have been an asset during the COVID 19 era.

Why Should We Care?

- The COVID-19 disruption provides an opportunity to assess how PAs can best position themselves to provide a high value proposition to the health care industry.
- Study findings will inform policy makers, educators, employers and AAPA as the profession advances optimal team practice and its branding efforts.

Key References

- 1 : Buerhaus et al., Nurse Employment During The First Fifteen Months Of The COVID-19 Pandemic. Health Aff (Millwood). 2022;41(1):79-85.
- 2: Wager et al., What impact has the coronavirus pandemic had on health employment? Published December 10, 2021.
- 3 : <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/what-impact-has-the-coronavirus-pandemic-had-on-healthcare-employment/>Reference
- 4 : Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment situation [Internet]. Washington (DC): BLS; 2021
- 5 : Westry et al., PAs and NPs provide essential care for children with COVID-19. JAAPA. 2022;35(1):53-57

Questions

Contact us

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The best people to show the value of PAs are PAs.