

PA Educators – Leaders in Oral Health Integration:

A Comparative Study of 14 Health Professions

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Background

- A historic lack of knowledge and attention among providers contributes to poor oral health.
- Calls to equip interprofessional teams with oral health competencies to expand workforce capacity, address systemic gaps.
- PA and other health profession educators have responded.

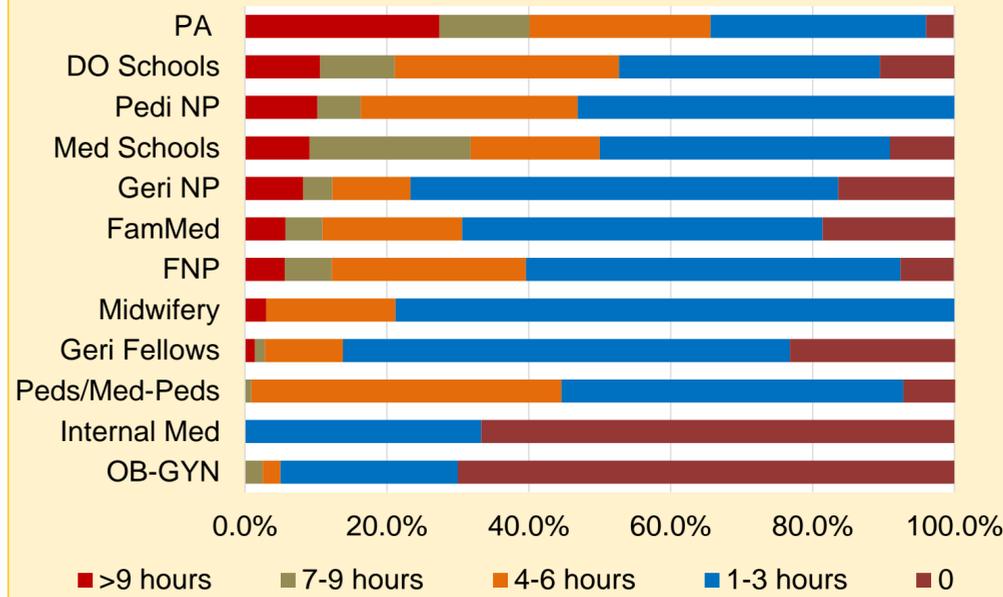
Purpose

- To benchmark efforts to integrate oral health into health profession education and identify facilitators and barriers to integration.

Methodology

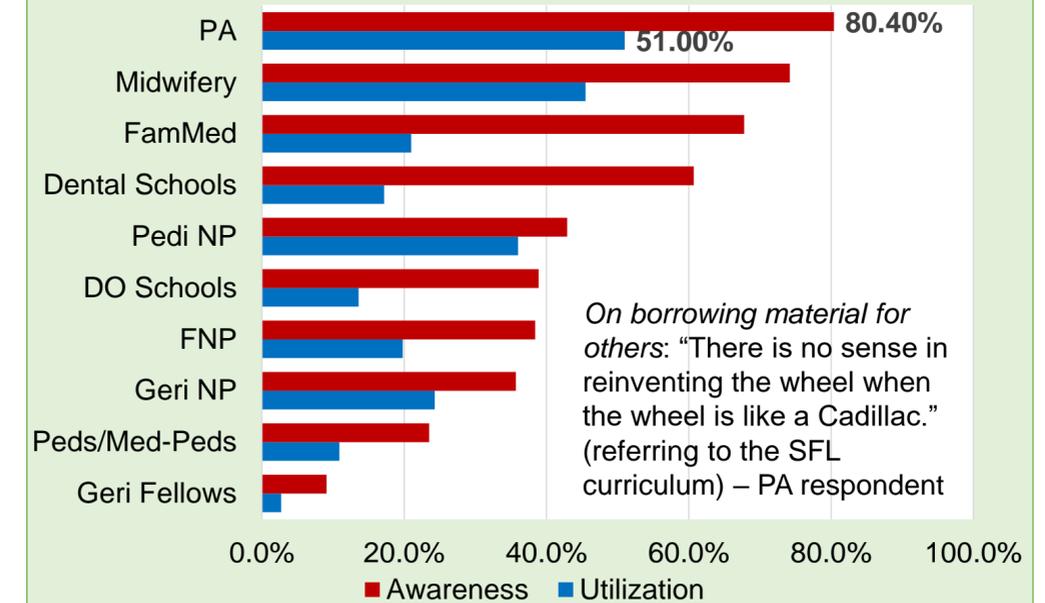
- Educators from 14 health professions were invited to complete a web-based, 19-item survey.
- Questions designed to provide intra-profession longitudinal benchmarks and comparable data across health professions.
- Questions generally included pre-defined response options; some included an "other" response.
- The survey was fielded in the spring of 2017.
- Response rates varied; included question data represents a response rate of at least 40%.

Hours of Oral Health Instruction



While most disciplines have 1-3 hours, almost one-third of PA programs include >9 hours. Disciplines that had an oral health champion, including PA programs, had significantly more hours in their curriculum.

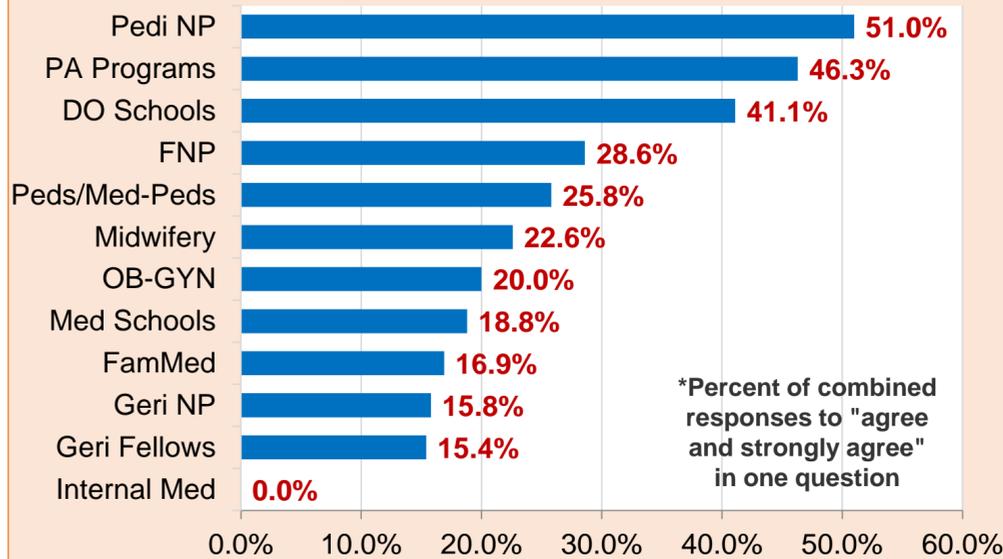
Smiles for Life Curriculum Awareness & Utilization



On borrowing material for others: "There is no sense in reinventing the wheel when the wheel is like a Cadillac." (referring to the SFL curriculum) – PA respondent

PA respondents had the greatest awareness and utilization of Smiles for Life. Utilizing a national tool fosters a common language and shared understanding of how to address oral health in practice.

Program Director's Satisfaction with Graduate Competence in Oral Health



While 46% of PA respondents indicated satisfaction with graduate competence in oral health, only 1 in 4 directors of most disciplines reported satisfaction, suggesting opportunities for improvement.

Conclusions

- Facilitators: Champions, leadership buy-in (PA Leadership Initiative in Oral Health collective impact strategy), use of resources (Smiles for Life and grant funding (47 nccPA Health Foundation grants)).
- Capitalize on PA faculty development in a high yield, low risk, quick educational integration; develop champion skills and scholarship via grant-funded work.
- With PA education growth, including 50+ programs in the pipeline, limited satisfaction with graduate competence, and continued public health need, these benchmarks should energize efforts for continued integration.
- **Next steps:** Leverage available grant funding; maximize use of local, regional, and national resources; coordinate interprofessional education and practice opportunities; and recognize potential to share learning objectives and evaluation strategies across and between disciplines.