Characteristics and Contributions of Physician Assistants/Associates Practicing in Psychiatry

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Background
A large proportion of the US population suffers from mental illness and the limited access to psychiatrists significantly contributes to the underuse of mental health services. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the psychiatric workforce shortage. Physician assistants/associates (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) can be used to contribute to the underuse of mental health services. Little is known about the size, practice characteristics, and contributions of the psychiatric PA workforce.

Objective & Method
The study’s objective was to quantify the characteristics and contributions of Physician Assistants/Associates practicing in psychiatry. The study’s objective was to quantify the characteristics and contributions of Physician Assistants/Associates practicing in psychiatry.

Results
Characteristics of PAs practicing in psychiatry vs. PAs practicing in all other disciplines

Key Findings and Conclusion
5. PAs in psychiatry, when compared to all other specialties, are more likely to be female (71.4% vs. 69.1%; p<0.015), less than 30 years old (15.0% vs. 11.6%; p<0.001), and reside in the South (43.8% vs. 34.1%; p<0.001). Majority of PAs in psychiatry (86.6%) are satisfied with their present position, and 68.1% report no symptoms of burnout. The self-reported income distribution by PAs for 2021 is similar for those in psychiatry and all other specialties.

PAs practicing in psychiatry vs. all other disciplines are more likely to participate in telemedicine (62.7% vs. 32.9%; p<0.001) and use telemedicine for 40 or more hours per week (15.4% vs. 1.3%; p<0.001). Understanding characteristics and employment settings of PAs in psychiatry are essential in medical labor supply and demand research.

Their employment represents a needed source of expertise in US mental health delivery services.

References