



Enhancing Access to Mental Health Services: The Growing Use of Telemedicine Among Physician Assistants/Associates in Psychiatry

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Background

- The pandemic was a major driving force that spurred telemedicine's rapid adoption and expansion.
- During this time, the number of PAs choosing to practice in psychiatry has also increased.
- However, there is a dearth of research exploring telemedicine use by PAs practicing in the discipline of psychiatry.

Methods

- We used the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) data from 2022 to investigate telemedicine use patterns and other key characteristics of PAs practicing in psychiatry.
- NCCPA data includes responses from 140,815 board certified PAs who provided or updated their information or certified their responses were up to date within the past three years.
- This study examines responses from the 117,748 PAs who provided their practice specialty.
- Descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses were conducted using SPSS version 29.

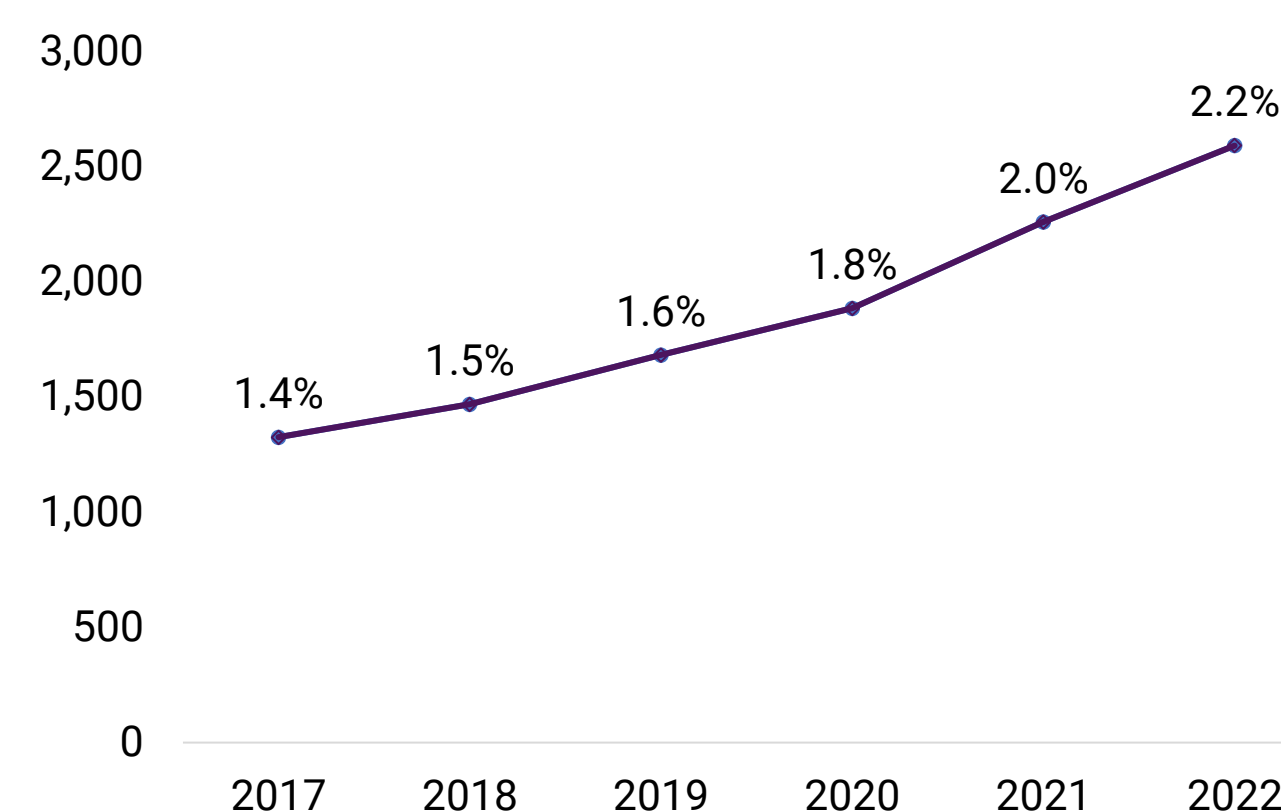
Results

Characteristics of PAs in Psychiatry

		PAs practicing in psychiatry (N=2,594)	PAs practicing in all other specialties (N=115,154)	P-value
Age	Median (IQR)	38 (31-49)	39 (33-48)	<0.001
Gender	Female	1884 (72.6%)	80126 (69.6%)	<0.001
	Male	710 (27.4%)	35014 (30.4%)	
Race	White	2014 (81.4%)	93183 (84.5%)	<0.001
	Asian	170 (6.9%)	6951 (6.3%)	
	Black/African American	124 (5.0%)	3755 (3.4%)	
	Multi-race	77 (3.1%)	2474 (2.2%)	
	Other*	88 (3.6%)	3877 (3.5%)	
Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic/non-Latino(a)	2331 (93.9%)	103267 (93.2%)	0.194
	Hispanic/Latino(a)	152 (6.1%)	7516 (6.8%)	
US region	South	1127 (43.5%)	39343 (34.3%)	<0.001
	Midwest	561 (21.7%)	22615 (19.7%)	
	West	467 (18.0%)	24358 (21.2%)	
	Northeast	433 (16.7%)	28421 (24.8%)	
Urban/rural setting	Urban	2423 (93.8%)	105945 (92.5%)	0.012
	Rural/Isolated	159 (6.2%)	8562 (7.5%)	
Speaks language other than English	No	2021 (80.1%)	86804 (77.5%)	0.002
	Yes	502 (19.9%)	25239 (22.5%)	
Practice setting	Office-based private practice	1113 (43.1%)	42547 (37.0%)	<0.001
	Federal government	175 (6.8%)	5432 (4.7%)	
	Hospital	439 (17.0%)	48487 (42.2%)	
	Other	855 (33.1%)	18373 (16.0%)	
Years certified	Median (IQR)	7 (4-15)	10 (5-18)	<0.001
Hours worked per week	Up to 30	361 (13.9%)	15403 (13.4%)	<0.001
	31-40	1712 (66.0%)	65560 (57.0%)	
	41-50	429 (16.5%)	26907 (23.4%)	
	51+	91 (3.5%)	7229 (6.3%)	
Patients seen each week	Up to 40	467 (24.3%)	21905 (26.5%)	<0.001
	41-60	556 (29.0%)	20529 (24.8%)	
	61-80	407 (21.2%)	15986 (19.3%)	
	81-100	293 (15.3%)	13462 (16.3%)	
	101+	197 (10.3%)	10801 (13.1%)	
Income	Median (IQR)	\$115000 (\$95000 - \$135000)	\$115000 (\$105000 - \$135000)	0.034
Job satisfaction of present job	Not satisfied	2127 (14.7%)	92905 (16.5%)	0.017
	Satisfied	366 (85.3%)	18313 (83.5%)	
Burnout	No symptoms of burnout	1667 (66.8%)	75417 (67.8%)	0.273
	One or more symptoms of burnout	830 (33.2%)	35822 (32.2%)	
Plan to leave clinical position in next 12 months	No	2317 (90.6%)	104076 (91.3%)	0.199
	Yes	241 (9.4%)	9914 (8.7%)	

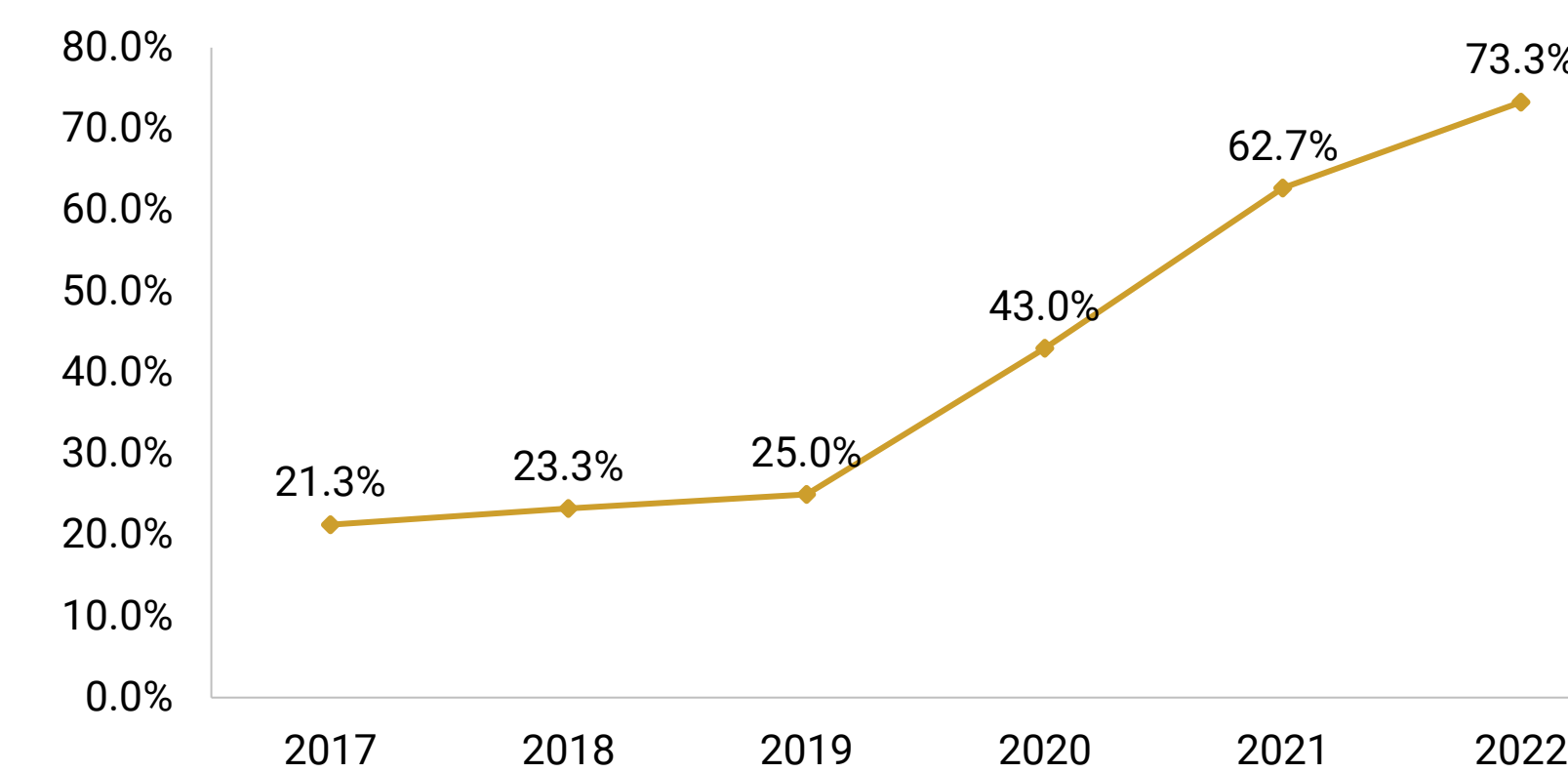
*Other includes those who selected "other," Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan Native

Percent of PA Workforce Practicing in Psychiatry by Year



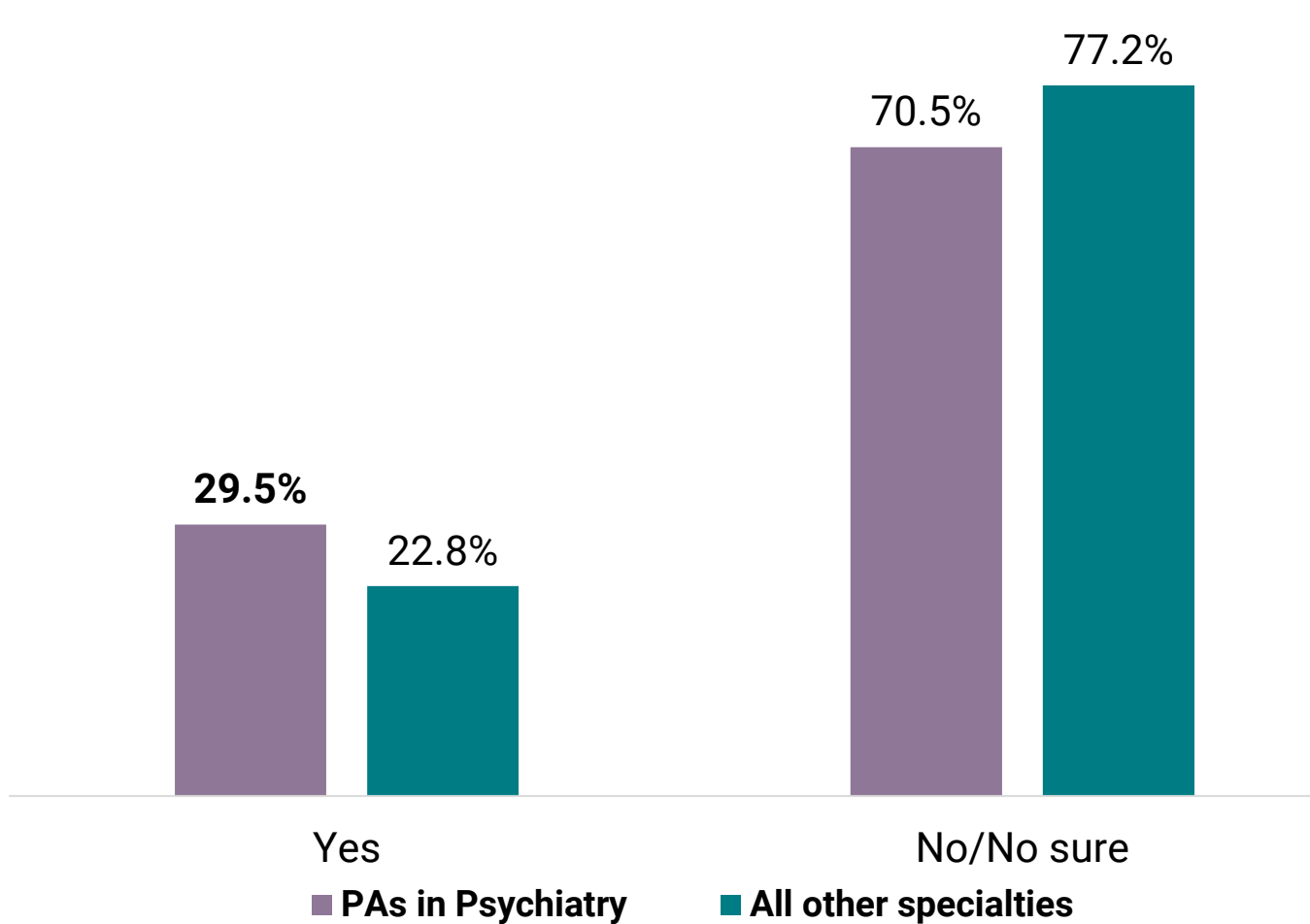
The percentage of PAs practicing in psychiatry has increased from 1.4% (n=1,327) in 2017 to 2.2% (n=2,594) in 2022.

Percent of PAs in Psychiatry who Use Telemedicine in their Practice



Telemedicine use among PAs in psychiatry grew from 21.3% in 2017 to 73.3% by 2022.

PAs in Psychiatry Providing Care in MUA/HPSA* Settings (p<0.001)



29.5% of PAs in psychiatry report working in MUA/HPSA settings.

*MUA=Medical Underserved Areas; HPSA=Health Professional Shortage Areas

Use of Telemedicine

		PAs practicing in psychiatry (N=2,594)	PAs practicing in all other specialties (N=115,154)	P-value
Functions of Telemedicine	Follow-up with patients	1843 (97.4%)	40112 (88.5%)	<0.001
	Diagnosing or treating patients	1791 (94.6%)	37347 (82.4%)	
	Managing patients with chronic diseases	1624 (85.8%)	29869 (65.9%)	
	Collaborating with another provider	1030 (54.4%)	13669 (30.1%)	
Modalities of Telemedicine	Videoconferencing	1848 (97.6%)	41633 (91.8%)	<0.001
	Remote patient monitoring	387 (20.4%)	8567 (18.9%)	
	Storing and forwarding data	195 (10.3%)	3890 (8.6%)	
Hours worked in telemedicine each week	<10	545 (28.8%)	36467 (80.5%)	<0.001
	10-19	344 (18.2%)	5600 (12.4%)	
	20-29	398 (21.1%)	2005 (4.4%)	
	30-39	341 (18.0%)	746 (1.6%)	
40+	262 (13.9%)	497 (1.1%)		

Key Findings and Conclusion

- In 2022, 2.2% (n=2,594) of PAs reported working in psychiatry.
- PAs in psychiatry are more likely to participate in telemedicine in their practice compared to all other specialties combined (73.3% vs. 39.5%).
- Over 28% of PAs practicing in psychiatry have a certificate of added qualifications (CAQ) in psychiatry, and 7.8% completed a postgraduate program.
- Among PAs in psychiatry who render care via telemedicine, over half (53.0%) spend 20 or more hours per week, and the vast majority (97.6%) use video conferencing.
- PAs practicing in psychiatry vs. those in all other specialties were also more likely to provide care to patients in underserved areas (29.5% vs. 22.8%).
- PAs in psychiatry are highly qualified and contribute to increasing patient access via telemedicine for convenient, cost-effective, and high-quality mental health care.
- Understanding the practice patterns of PAs in psychiatry will help quantify their contribution to the overall psychiatric workforce.

References

- National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2023, August). 2022 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants by Specialty: An Annual Report of the National Commission on Certification of PAs. Retrieved September 1, 2023. www.nccpa.net/resources/nccpa-research/
- Mauldin SG, Morton-Rias D, Barnhill GC, Kozikowski A, Hooker RS. The role of PAs in providing mental health care. JAAPA. 2020;33(12):34-41. doi:10.1097/01.JAA.0000694988.35913.1a

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