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#### Physician Assistants/Associates with Doctoral Degrees: Where Are They Now?

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## Physician Assistants/Associates with Doctoral Degrees: Where Are They Now?

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# Bethel University<sub>1</sub>; University of Maryland<sub>2</sub>; Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science<sub>3</sub>; University of Idaho<sub>4</sub>

#### Introduction

- Despite the efficacy of the master's degree in training PAs to provide excellent patient care and satisfaction, there is **debate regarding a potential transition to** entry-level and terminal doctoral degree credentials.
- The PA profession is largely divided regarding the potential move to a doctoral degree and few research studies have been conducted surrounding the topic of adding or requiring a doctoral degree for PAs (1).
- As the U.S. becomes an increasingly multicultural and diverse society, the PA workforce must reflect that diversity to best serve patient, particularly given that increased diversity in healthcare professionals is associated with positive healthcare outcomes (2,3).
- The potential for leadership opportunities is among the top three positive impacts a doctoral degree may have for the profession (4-6)
- The practicing settings and specialties PAs with doctoral degrees is currently unknown (7).

### **Objectives**

- The purpose of this study was **to describe** demographic characteristics and practice patterns of PAs who have doctoral degrees.
- We hope this work may shed more light on the potential impacts of doctoral degrees for PAs and provide needed evidence for the ongoing debate on whether the PA profession should move to doctoral level training.

### Methods

- Secondary analysis of data
- 2021 Salary Survey of the American Academy of PAs
- 13,865 PAs responded to the survey (13.3% estimated response rate)
- We examined the relationships between holding a doctoral degree, demographic characteristics, and workrelated variables
- Descriptive bivariate statistics and chi-square tests

### Results

- Significant differences in multiple demographic factors and work-related factors between PAs with and without doctoral degrees.
- Table 1 and Table 2

#### Conclusions

- PAs with doctoral degrees have higher frequencies of men and PAs of color
- May be associated with upward mobility at workplaces.
- Most PAs with doctoral degrees in the sample were holding informal or formal leadership positions, which may be influenced by the fact that most doctoral credentialed PAs have been PAs and at their current positions for longer lengths of time
- The study also has implications for the PA profession's ongoing debate regarding **terminal doctoral credentials** = attract more males to pursue the profession due to the title, rank, and potential leadership potential

### Limitations and Future Research

- This was a descriptive study, without controlling for individual variables.
- Recommend that future researchers examine the order of credentialing as well as motivating factors for doctoral degrees
- Low response rate (however, large national dataset and representative of PA profession based on other data sets)

#### Table 1. Demographic factors by doctorate degree

### Age 50 6 Gen Μ Fe Race

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	Does Not H Doctorate D		Has a Doctorate Degree	
	п	%	n	%
<u>)</u>				
Jnder 30	2,897	26.0	19	6.4
0-39	4,628	41.6	70	23.6
0-49	1,996	17.9	88	29.6
0-59	1,019	9.2	68	22.9
0 or older	584	5.2	52	17.5
nder				
/fale	3,310	26.5	149	45.0
emale	9,186	73.5	182	55.0
ce/ethnicity				
Ion-Hispanic White	10,092	82.3	226	70.4
Ion-Hispanic Black/African American	263	2.1	24	7.5
Ispanic or Latinx	738	6.0	36	11.2
Jon-Hispanic Asian	847	6.9	24	7.5
Other and multi-racial	319	2.6	11	3.4

#### Table 2. Work-related factors by doctorate degree

$\begin{array}{c clinician} & 12,366 & 99.2 & 300 & 90.4 \\ Educator & 95 & 0.8 & 32 & 9.6 \\ \hline \\ educrship Role & & < 0.001 \\ \hline \\ Formal & 1,325 & 10.5 & 98 & 28.9 \\ \hline \\ Formal & 1,325 & 10.5 & 98 & 28.9 \\ \hline \\ Informal & 3,072 & 24.4 & 102 & 30.1 \\ \hline \\ None & 8,178 & 65.0 & 139 & 41.0 \\ \hline \\ Outpatient Clinic & 6,791 & 54.0 & 158 & 46.4 \\ Hospital & 4,557 & 36.2 & 119 & 35.1 \\ Hospital & 4,557 & 36.2 & 119 & 35.1 \\ Other & 563 & 4.5 & 39 & 11.5 \\ \hline \\ Primary Care Center & 666 & 5.3 & 23 & 6.8 \\ Other & 563 & 4.5 & 39 & 11.5 \\ \hline \\ Primary Care & 2,699 & 21.5 & 71 & 20.9 \\ Primary Care & 2,699 & 21.5 & 71 & 20.9 \\ Primary Care & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Emergency Medicine Subspecialties & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Emergency Medicine Subspecialties & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Subspecialties & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Subspecialties & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Subspecialties & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Subspecialties & 3,506 & 27.9 & 57 & 16.8 \\ Subspecialties & 3,502 & 27.9 & 100 & 32.2 \\ Mother Specialties & 3,502 & 27.9 & 100 & 32.9 \\ Domagi K, Beater V, Kasening and beachmarking quity control in the clinic subspecial state in the clin$		Does Not H Doctorate D		Has a Do Deg			
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15-19       1,213       9.6       39       11.5       Education Community Assumptions About an Entry-level Doctoral Degree. J Physician Assist Educ. 2021;32(4):207-224. doi:10.1097/JPA.0000000000385         20 or more       3,437       28.0       52       15.5       6. Kibe LW, Kayingo G, Schrode KM, Klein A. Academic leadership in physician assistant/associate medical education: a cross-sectional analysis of the association with doctoral degree, gender, and minority status. BMC Med Educ. 2022;22(1):808. Published 2022 Nov 23.         10-14       2,413       19.7       79       23.5       Education on Certificat profile of certified physician Assistant/associate medical education: a cross-sectional analysis of the association with doctoral degree, gender, and minority status. BMC Med Educ. 2022:22(1):808. Published 2022 Nov 23.         15-19       864       7.0       45       13.4       7. National Commission on Certified physician Assistants Lanual report]. 2022. https://www.ncepa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf         20 or more       388       3.2       18       5.4       assistants Lanual report]. 2022. https://www.ncepa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf         Median or below       7,460       60.0       126       37.7	10-14	1,793	14.3	86	25.4		
20 of more       1,702       13.5       9.5       20.0       224.0       224. doi:10.1097/JPA.000000000000000000000000000000000000	15-19	1,213	9.6	39	11.5		- • • •
ears at current employer       < 0.001       6. Kibe LW, Kayingo G, Schrode KM, Klein A. Academic         0-1       3,437       28.0       52       15.5       6. Kibe LW, Kayingo G, Schrode KM, Klein A. Academic         5-9       4,691       38.2       124       36.9       6. Kibe LW, Kayingo G, Schrode KM, Klein A. Academic         10-14       2,413       19.7       79       23.5       6. Kibe LW, Kayingo G, Schrode KM, Klein A. Academic         15-19       864       7.0       45       13.4       40:10.1186/s12909-022.03817-6         15-19       475       3.9       18       5.4       Assistants. 2021 statistical profile of certified physician         20 or more       388       3.2       18       5.4       assistants. 2021 statistical profile of certified physician         stimated annual salary <sup>a</sup> Median or below       7,460       60.0       126       37.7       37.7	20 or more	1,702	13.5	95	28.0		
0-1       3,437       28.0       52       15.5       leadership in physician assistant/associate medical education: a cross-sectional analysis of the association with doctoral degree, gender, and minority status. BMC Med         10-14       2,413       19.7       79       23.5       doi:10.1186/s12909-022-03817-6         15-19       864       7.0       45       13.4       doi:10.1186/s12909-022-03817-6         15-19       475       3.9       18       5.4       Assistants. 2021 statistical profile of certified physician assistant/subject an assistants and assistants	ears at current employer					< 0.001	
5-9       4,691       58.2       124       56.9       doctoral degree, gender, and minority status. BMC Med         10-14       2,413       19.7       79       23.5       Educ. 2022;22(1):808. Published 2022 Nov 23.         15-19       864       7.0       45       13.4       doi:10.1186/s12909-022-03817-6         15-19       475       3.9       18       5.4       Assistants. 2021 statistical profile of certified physician         20 or more       388       3.2       18       5.4       assistants [annual report]. 2022. <a href="https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf">https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf         Median or below       7,460       60.0       126       37.7</a>	0-1	3,437	28.0	52	15.5		leadership in physician assistant/associate medical
10-14       2,413       19.7       79       23.5       Educ. 2022;22(1):808. Published 2022 Nov 23.         15-19       864       7.0       45       13.4       doi:10.1186/s12909-022-03817-6         15-19       475       3.9       18       5.4       Assistants. 2021 statistical profile of certified physician         20 or more       388       3.2       18       5.4       assistants [annual report]. 2022. <a href="https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf">https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf         Median or below       7,460       60.0       126       37.7</a>	5-9	4,691	38.2	124	36.9		•
15-19       804       7.0       45       15.4         15-19       475       3.9       18       5.4         20 or more       388       3.2       18       5.4         stimated annual salary <sup>a</sup> Median or below       7,460       60.0       126       37.7	10-14	2,413	19.7	79	23.5		Educ. 2022;22(1):808. Published 2022 Nov 23.
15-19       475       3.9       18       5.4       Assistants. 2021 statistical profile of certified physician         20 or more       388       3.2       18       5.4       assistants [annual report]. 2022. <a href="https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf">https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A-3.2.pdf         Median or below       7,460       60.0       126       37.7       37.7</a>	15-19	864	7.0	45	13.4		
stimated annual salarya< 0.001content/uploads/2022/08/2021StatProfileofCertifiedPAs-A- 3.2.pdfMedian or below7,46060.012637.7	15-19	475	3.9	18	5.4		
stimated annual salary <sup>a</sup> < 0.001         3.2.pdf           Median or below         7,460         60.0         126         37.7	20 or more	388	3.2	18	5.4		
Median or below 7,460 60.0 126 37.7	stimated annual salary <sup>a</sup>					< 0.001	
Above median 4,965 40.0 208 62.3	Median or below	7,460	60.0	126	37.7		
	Above median	4,965	40.0	208	62.3		

