



JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND SATISFACTION OF AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPISTS



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Introduction

Job satisfaction and responsibilities of physical therapists (PT) have been studied in the United States of America (USA) (1,2). However, the details regarding PT job satisfaction are confined to two studies limited to specific states within the USA, including one study focused on PT in Wisconsin, and the other from the perspective of patient's opinions regarding health promotion (4,5). The purpose of this study was to evaluate job responsibilities and job satisfaction in order to identify enjoyable duties of the profession, as well as common issues and concerns among PT in the USA.

Methods

- 113 PT (Age = 54.8 ± 4.52 years) participated. The survey instrument was sent via conventional mail to 500 PT in the USA whose information was obtained from the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Subjects included 75 women and 37 men, from 39 states. A qualitative, cross-sectional conventional mail survey instrument was used to characterize the background and position profile PT who are members of the APTA.
- Subjects provided written informed consent prior to participating and the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board.
- The validated survey instrument, National Role Delineation of Physical Therapists, was adopted from a previous published research study of physical therapists (4). It contained 33 open-ended and fixed-response questions, resulting in 452 pages of data.
- Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationship between subject variables and measures of job satisfaction.
- Descriptive data were analyzed, using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 27.0).
- Answers to open-ended questions were content-analyzed according to previously published recommendations (6).

Results

- Current job satisfaction was negatively correlated with minutes spent documenting ($r = -.37$, $p = 0.001$) and positively correlated with salary ($r = .30$, $p = .004$) and career satisfaction ($r = .66$, $p = .001$).
- Career satisfaction was negatively correlated with seeking jobs outside PT ($r = -.61$, $p = 0.001$).
- There were no correlations ($p \geq 0.05$) between hours worked per week, time of day start, time of day end, and job satisfaction.
- Table 1 shows the daily job responsibilities of PT. Table 2 shows the top five most enjoyable job responsibilities of PT. Table 3 indicates the top 5 least enjoyable job responsibilities of PT. Table 4 contains the most time-consuming job responsibilities of PT. Table 5 includes reasons why subjects chose PT as a career.

Table 1: Job Responsibilities (N = 113)

Higher Order Theme	Number
Orthopedic / Clinical assessment	83
Conditioning and rehabilitation exercise	81
Evidence-based practice	78
Consultation with physicians	74
Professional development	66
Medical conditions and disabilities	65
Equipment recommendations	64

Table 2: Most Enjoyable Job Responsibilities (N = 113)

Higher Order Theme	Number
Direct patient care	69
Staff collaboration	47
Patient improvements / Progress	43
Other	34
None	31

Table 3: Least Enjoyable Job Responsibilities (N = 113)

Higher Order Theme	Number
Documentation	86
Other	42
None	27
Administrative tasks	20
Dealing with insurance companies	20

Table 4: Time-Consuming Job Responsibilities (N = 113)

Higher Order Theme	Number
Direct patient care	86
Documentation / Paperwork	71
Other	70
None	66

Table 5: Reasons Why Participants Chose PT (N = 113)

Higher Order Theme	Number
To help people	30
Max. independence with disability / Injury	28
Patient Interaction	17
Healthcare job desire	17

Discussion

This study was first to assess job specific responsibilities and satisfaction of PT in the USA. The finding of relationships between job satisfaction and factors other than mental health, such as salary and seeking other jobs, and minutes spent documenting, are consistent with other studies (1,2,3). Orthopedic / clinical assessment, conditioning and rehabilitation exercise, and evidence-based practice were the most reported job responsibilities, similar to data found in other studies (4,7). Direct patient care and staff collaboration were the most enjoyed job responsibilities which contribute to job satisfaction, consistent with other studies (2,3).

Discussion- continued

Direct patient care and documentation / paperwork were reported as the most time-consuming job responsibilities, consistent with those of other allied health professions (3,4,7). These data show a desire to help, maximize independence, and interact with patients as reasons for choosing PT as a career, similar to other studies (4,7). Documentation was the least enjoyable and most time-consuming job responsibility consistent with other allied health professions (3,4,7).

Conclusion

PT in the USA have many job responsibilities, with direct patient care and documentation being the most time-consuming. Some of these time-consuming responsibilities were very enjoyable, while others were not. Helping people, maximizing independence with disability / injury, and patient interaction were the main reasons for choosing PT as a career. The most enjoyable and time-consuming responsibilities were direct patient care. Prospective and current PT can use these data to further understand the current status of the profession in the USA.

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