

Exploring Compensation Models, Earnings Incongruities, and Autonomy Preferences Among Dermatology PAs in Pennsylvania

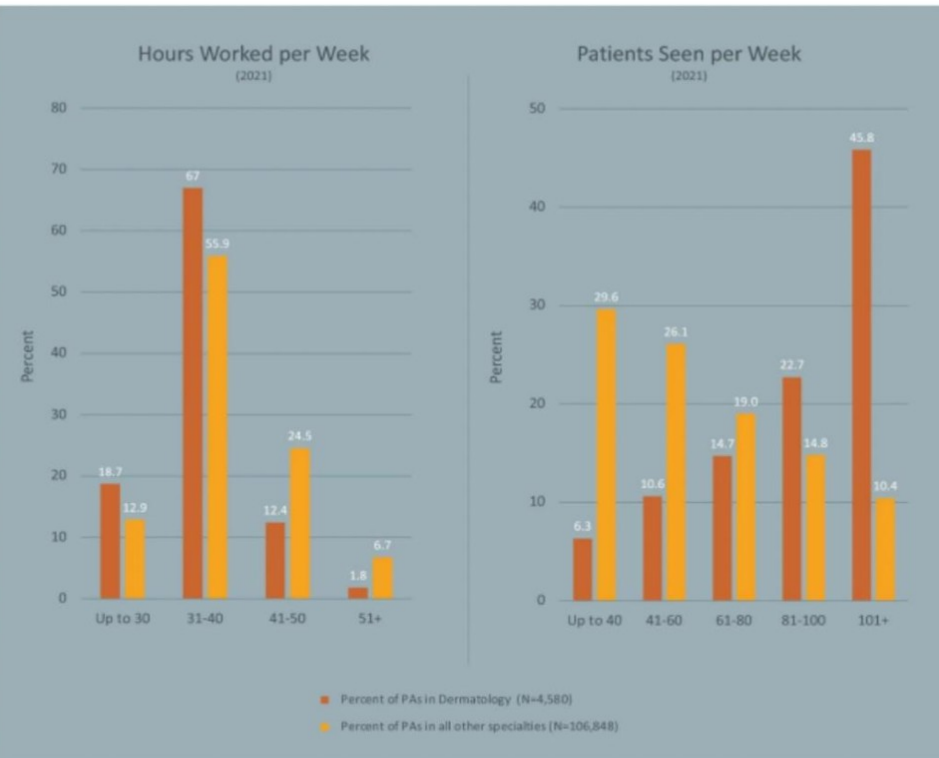
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Introduction

- Dermatology Physician Assistants/Associates (PAs) make up 4,580 of the practicing PAs in the US.¹
- Dermatology PAs manage an average patient load that exceeds 100 patients per week, significantly more than other specialties but only early \$10,000 more on average compared to PAs in other specialties (Figure 1).¹
- A 2017 SDPA salary survey showed that PAs who received a percent collections had higher reported salaries.⁴
- It stands that there is a conspicuous gap in our understanding of how or if productivity measures like individual collections may influence PA's remuneration.

Figure 1: Productivity of Dermatology Physician Assistants (PAs) as Measured in Patients Seen per Week and Hours Worked per Week in 2021



Methodology

- Dataset used for this analysis was derived from previously published salary survey administered by Pennsylvania Dermatology Physician Assistants (PDPA) who surveyed their 346 members.⁶
- Study received a total of 84 responses (84/346) yielding a 24% response rate.
- Statistical Analysis: The salary of full-time PAs was assessed using a single-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey's HSD, categorizing types into production-based, base salary plus bonus, base salary only, and hourly. To compare between compensation types, a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances was employed. Furthermore, the relationship between years of experience and productivity was explored through the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient.

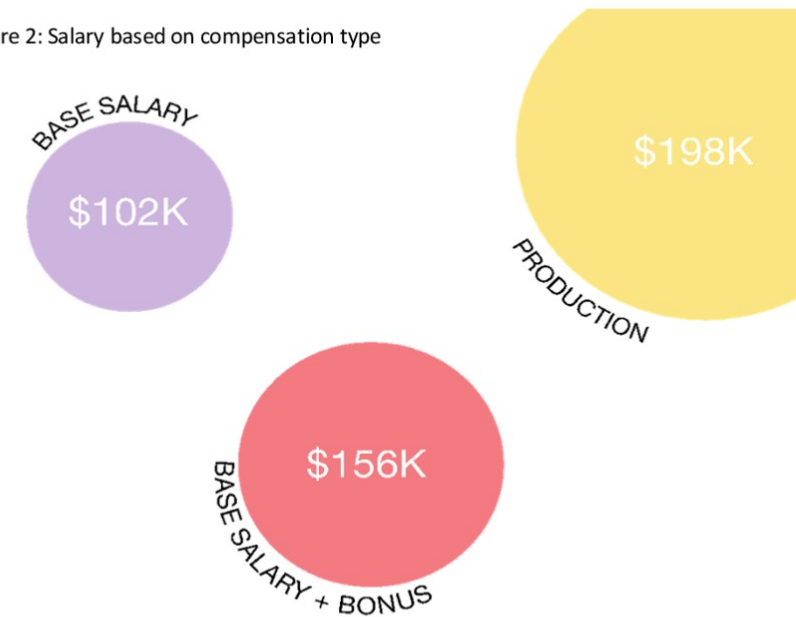
Results

- With the full-time participants only, there was a significant difference in pay by compensation structure, $F(2,76)=9.98$, $p<0.001$.
- PAs' collections were significantly higher for dermatology PAs compensated based on a production-based structure versus a base salary plus a bonus structure, $t(46)=4.20$, $p=0.0001$.
- When comparing the productivity measured in patients per hour, there was a positive correlation between productivity and collections, $r(63)=0.540$, $p<0.001$, $r^2=0.292$.
- There is no difference in productivity based on compensation structure type $t(62)=1.40$, $p=0.17$.
- There was no significant relationship between years of experience and productivity as measured in patients seen per hour, $r(82)=0.038$, $p=0.71$.
- PAs who earned the highest income reported job autonomy as a top value $r(79)=-0.2208$, $p=0.048$.

Discussion

- There is a significant difference in annual salary based on compensation model, specifically between production versus base salary and base salary + bonus versus base salary. When discussing different compensation models, it important to measure a PA's collections and to have complete transparency between the PA and their employer. See figure 2.

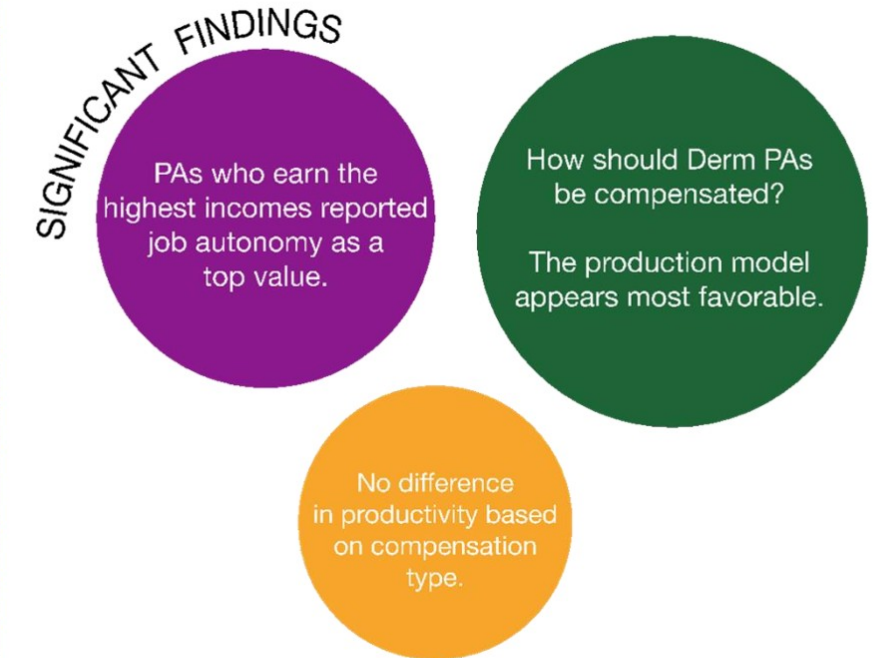
Figure 2: Salary based on compensation type



Limitations

- Data on PA compensation was self-reported by respondents, introducing potential for response bias and inaccuracies.
- Smaller sample size both with actual cohort size and small geographical location of only one state, limiting generalizability to broader population of Dermatology PAs.
- The survey did not include questions regarding the acquisition of benefits by the respondents through their employers; benefits, such as health insurance, retirement plans, or paid time off.
- In light of these limitations, it is essential to consider the potential missing information when drawing conclusions or making generalizations about the compensation and benefits of physician assistants.

Figure 3: Significant study findings



Conclusion

- Dermatology PAs continue to add value to the dermatology team, and this pay structure analysis is important to ensure fair compensation for the work being done by the dermatology PA profession.
- Overall, our study showed that PAs compensated based on production-based or salary + bonus salary structures made significantly higher salaries.
- Ultimately, a follow-up research study to further evaluate the production payment model and explore more specific questions about compensation benefits and other factors that influence compensation would be a good next step.
- Physician assistants being given freedom, independence and discretion may feel respected and valued. This could result in positive effects on productivity and as a downstream result higher compensation.

References

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