

## A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF BURNOUT AMONG PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS

Berry JW, Barnett J, Butts C, Ekdahl D, Monson H, Tabatt-Taylor N, Raasakka N, Harper S  
Physical Therapist Assistant Program, Northland Community and Technical College, East  
Grand Forks, MN

No Funding

This study was approved by the IRB at Northland Community and Technical College, and has been accepted to be presented at APTA CSM 2017.

**BACKGROUND & PURPOSE:** Occupational burnout is common among healthcare practitioners and can be a factor with recruiting and retaining employees. Although several previous studies have analyzed burnout among physical therapists, no previous study has researched burnout among physical therapist assistants (PTAs). The purpose of this study was to assess the level of burnout in PTAs and to analyze the relationships between burnout and demographic and institutional factors

**METHODS & MATERIALS:** An online survey link was emailed to 1499 licensed PTA's in WA; and mailed to 290 PTAs in ND and SD. 255 surveys were returned for a response rate of 14.3%. Subjects completed a demographic survey as well as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which consists of 22 questions assessing burnout in three areas: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

**ANALYSIS:** Independent sample t-tests and Pearson Correlations were utilized.

**RESULTS:** Subjects had moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, low levels of depersonalization, and high levels of personal accomplishment. Subjects with over 10 years of experience had significantly higher levels of depersonalization ( $p = .033$ ). Subjects who worked with a productivity standard had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion ( $p = .001$ ). No significant differences in burnout were found in regard to sex, APTA membership, or past experience as a clinical instructor. A significant positive correlation was found between hours worked per week and emotional exhaustion.

**CONCLUSIONS:** PTAs with a productivity standard and those who work longer hours are at increased risk for emotional exhaustion, while PTA's with over 10 years of experience are at increased risk of depersonalization.

**IMPLICATIONS:** PTAs who work longer hours, those with a productivity standard, and those with over 10 years of experience should develop coping strategies regarding elevated levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which may assist with increasing retention rates in physical therapy departments.