

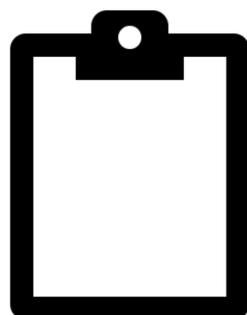
Abstract

Physician Assistants (PA) form an integral part of our healthcare system. In addition to caring for and prescribing directed medications to patients, PAs can participate and practice in all areas of medical care, including in the clinical and translational research space. Despite this fact, only about 1 in 4 PAs are involved in clinical research. A student-wide survey of Rutgers School of Health Professions (R-SHP) PA program students was conducted to gauge the level of interest and potential engagement in clinical translational research activities.

A total of 32 students in years 1-3 of the R-SHP PA program responded to the survey. Students collectively were concerned (95%) and felt that learning about treatment, managing adverse events, safety, and regulatory information on drugs or biologics were key components to their education. 83% of students also felt that there is value in conducting, managing, and enrolling their patients in clinical trials. All the students that have had previous experience involved in clinical trials favored the joint degree program. These results indicated that there was much interest in involving R-SHP PA students in clinical research and education. It also supports the potential of initially identifying courses in the current MS PA program curriculum as well as the MS Clinical Research Management program curriculum wherein learning outcomes overlap, which can then provide the basis for further investigation into the future creation of a joint degree program or badging credentialing in clinical research as part of the R-SHP PA program.

Methods/Approach

REDCap was used to create a survey of 14 multiple choice questions to gauge students' interest and exposure to clinical trials and clinical translational research.



- YES/NO
- Multiple choice (Not important, somewhat important, important, very important)

Student responses were anonymous, and the data collected was used to determine whether students would ultimately be interested in a joint degree program, and what specific translational research topics they would be interested to learn more about.

To determine significance, questions were treated as independent experiments and grouped based on theme, and therefore each theme had (N=4) questions to compare.

Population

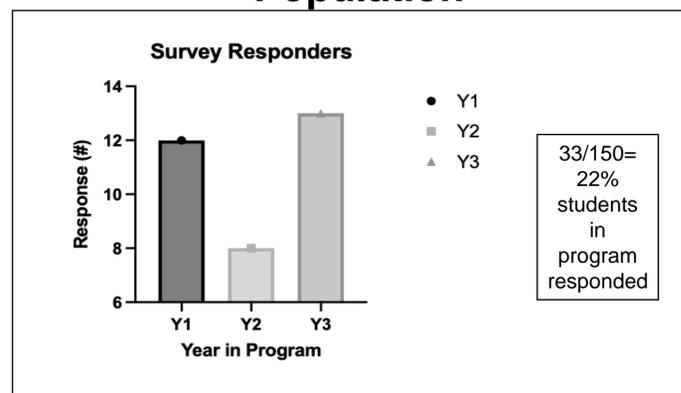


Figure 1. 22% of the current Rutgers School of Health Professions (R-SHP) Physician Assistant program students responded to the survey, with an approximately even distribution of responses, (12, 8, 13) between the three-year levels, respectively.

“How important do you feel is learning about research and development of treatment to better care for your patients?”

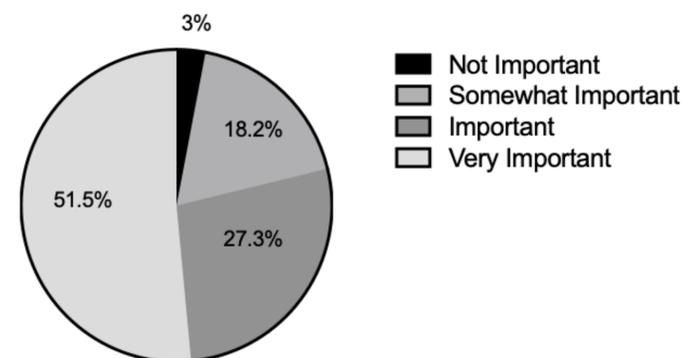


Figure 2. Most students felt it was at least important to learn about research and development in the sense of clinical trials to better care for their patients (79%). Only 3% of students did not find this type of education important.

Conclusions

The data collected from this survey strongly suggested that students in Rutgers R-SHP PA program found clinical and translational science and education important and were interested in learning key themes related to clinical studies, patient care and patient involvement in clinical trials. Most notably, students who had previous exposure to clinical trials were much more likely to support a joint program in clinical trials. These results support the adoption of a joint degree program or badging credentials that will allow students who are interested to take part in additional education in clinical and translational research. For future work, we see a benefit in expanding the survey to Rutgers PA program alumni and possibly other PA students state and country wide. Adopting such programs could enhance the emerging workforce in clinical and translational research.

Results

Question Themes

Previous Experience: “Have you ever participated in the design and conduct of a clinical trial?”

Patient Focused: “Would you be interested in learning more about managing adverse events and safety surveillance as you prescribe various drugs, biologics, or devices for your patients?”

Clinical Focused: “Do you see value in education on clinical trial management that includes learning about ethical standards, scientific design, clinical operations, regulatory requirements, and patient engagement?”

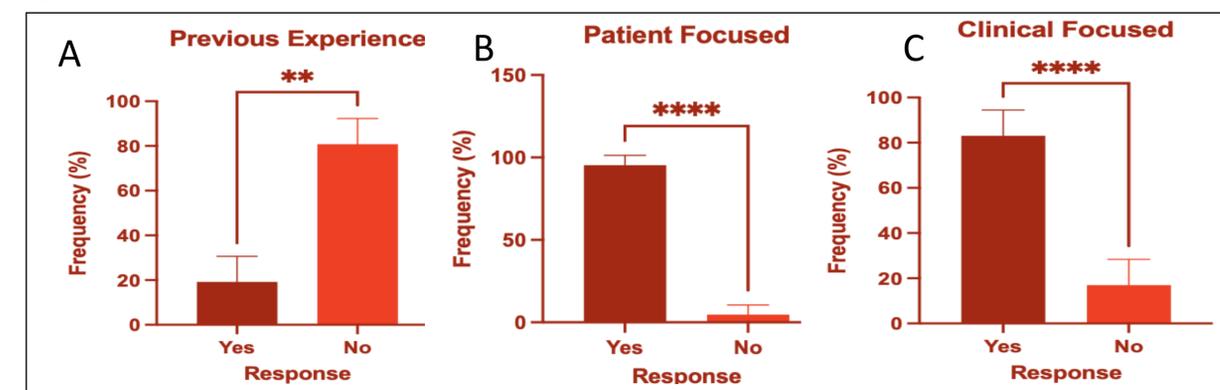
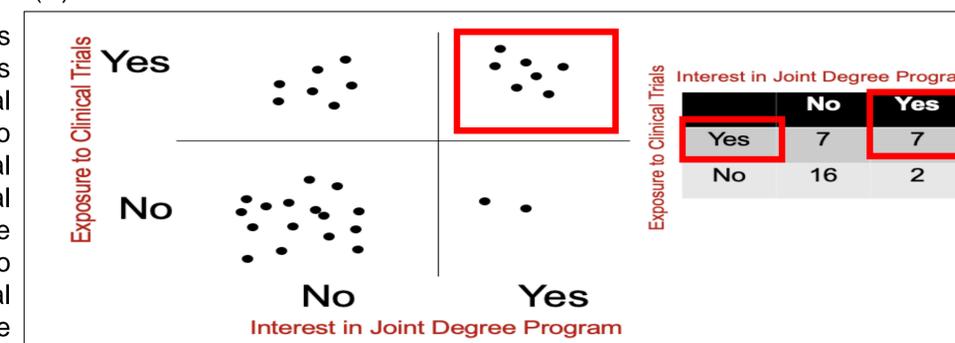


Figure 3. To determine significance, questions were broken up by theme: previous experience to clinical trials, patient focused, or clinical focused (see examples above for questions in themes). Only about 20% of the students who responded have had previous experience in clinical trials (A). Most students, (~90%) found education on improving the livelihood of their patients important (B), while a smaller majority (~80%) found that education on clinical trial management/affiliating with clinical trials was something they were interested in (C).

Figure 4. Students who had previous clinical trial experience, or who had taken additional classes on clinical trials, were more likely to want to engage in a formal joint degree program.



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<https://njacts.rbhs.rutgers.edu/>

References

1. eCareers, H. (2019, January 16). Physician assistant career paths: Clinical practice vs. clinical research. Health eCareers. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.healthcareers.com/article/career/physician-assistant-career-paths-clinical-practice-vs.-clinical-research>.