

The Effect of a Pediatric Specialty Certification in Physical Therapy on Status and Clinical Practice

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose:

- The effects a specialty certification have on a physical therapist has not been explored in the literature.
- The purpose of this research report was to evaluate the effects an American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) Pediatric Specialty Certification (PCS) have on a physical therapist's status and clinical practice.

Methods:

- An electronic survey was mailed to 272 physical therapists with an active PCS. The total number of useable survey responses was 111, for a response rate of 44.6%.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The majority of participants did not experience a change in status or clinical practice; however, the majority also reported they were more satisfied with their careers and planned on renewing the PCS.

INTRODUCTION

- The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is the professional organization representing the profession of physical therapy across the nation.
- Pediatrics was recognized as a specialty area by the APTA House of Delegates in 1978 (Heriza, Lunnen, Fischer, & Harris, 1983).
- As of June, 2013, there were 1,271 pediatric specialists in the United States (ABPTS, 2014).
- Achieving a pediatric specialty certification (PCS) requires a significant investment of time and financial resources by the physical therapist:
 - Evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care in pediatrics within the past ten years with 25% of those hours needing to be completed within the previous three years
 - OR
 - completing an APTA-credentialed post-professional clinical residency in pediatrics.
- Although the process of achieving a PCS is a demanding one there has been no significant research evaluating the impact that a PCS has on the physical therapist's status and clinical practice after receiving the certification.
- Job status and clinical practice was evaluated to provide a greater understanding of the value of a PCS.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Specialty Certification and Status

- An individual's salary indicates his/her value in the free market.
- This value increases when an individual invests in his/her skills and education with a certification (Ng, Eby, Sorensen & Feldman, 2005).

Benefits and Incentives for Physical Therapists

- An ABPTS survey found that over half of the employers would pay for some of the cost of the certification, with the private practices most often offering this incentive.
- This study revealed that 43% of the participants indicated board-certified applicants received priority hiring.
- Half of employers in the outpatient and private practice facilities offered non-financial rewards, including: a change in job title, an increase in authority, or an increase in responsibility (ABPTS, 2011).

Specialty Certification and Clinical Practice

- Research concerning how specialty certification affects clinical practice is limited.

METHODS

Instrumentation

- 29-question electronic survey instrument was developed consisting of questions regarding demographics, job status, and clinical practice.
- The survey was revised on two occasions by two Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) faculty members within the Physical Therapy Program.

Inclusion criteria

- Each participant was a currently licensed physical therapist with an active PCS and valid email address.

Participant recruitment

- Attended Section on Pediatrics Annual Conference (SoPAC) and used convenience sampling.
- ABPTS pediatric directory searching all 50 states.
- A total of 251 participants were recognized via these two methods.

Data Collection Techniques.

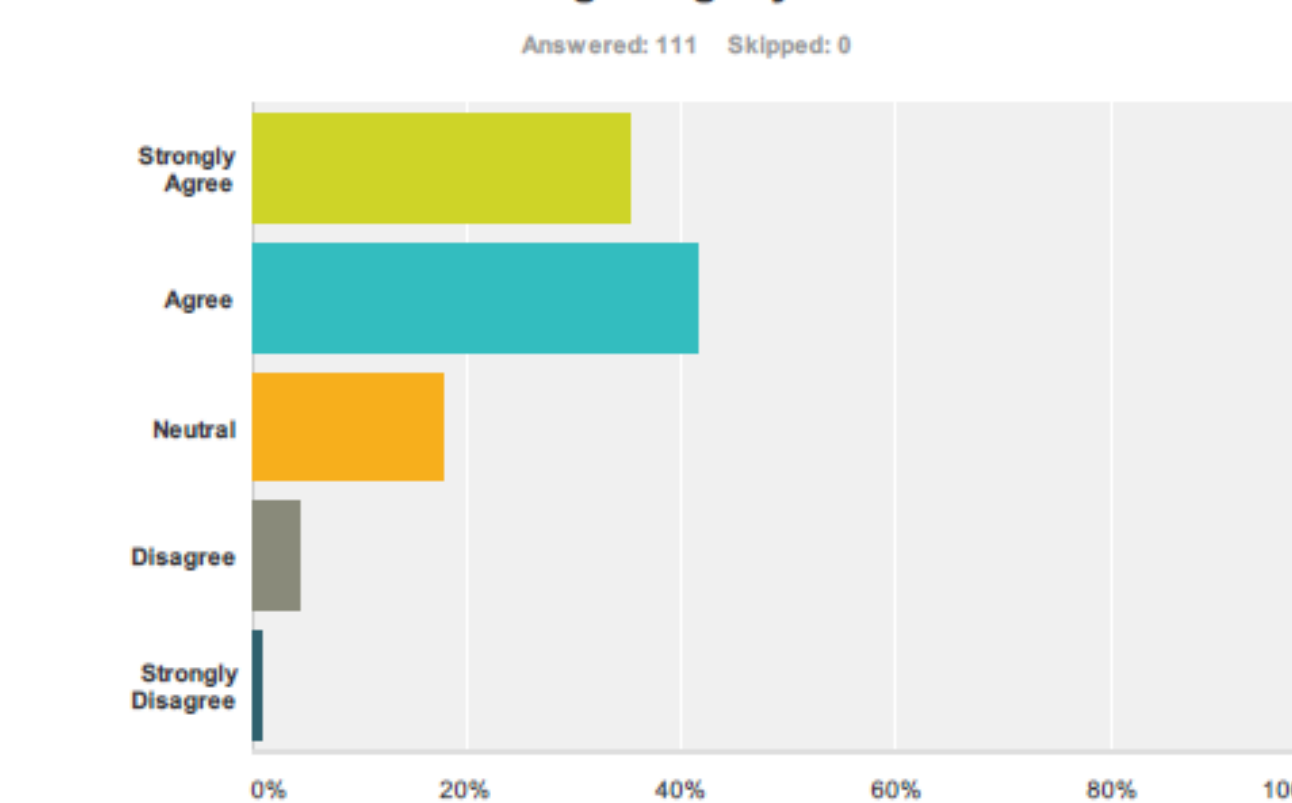
- The survey sent out via SurveyMonkey.com and was open for 30 days with a reminder email being sent out on the 15th and 24th day.

RESULTS

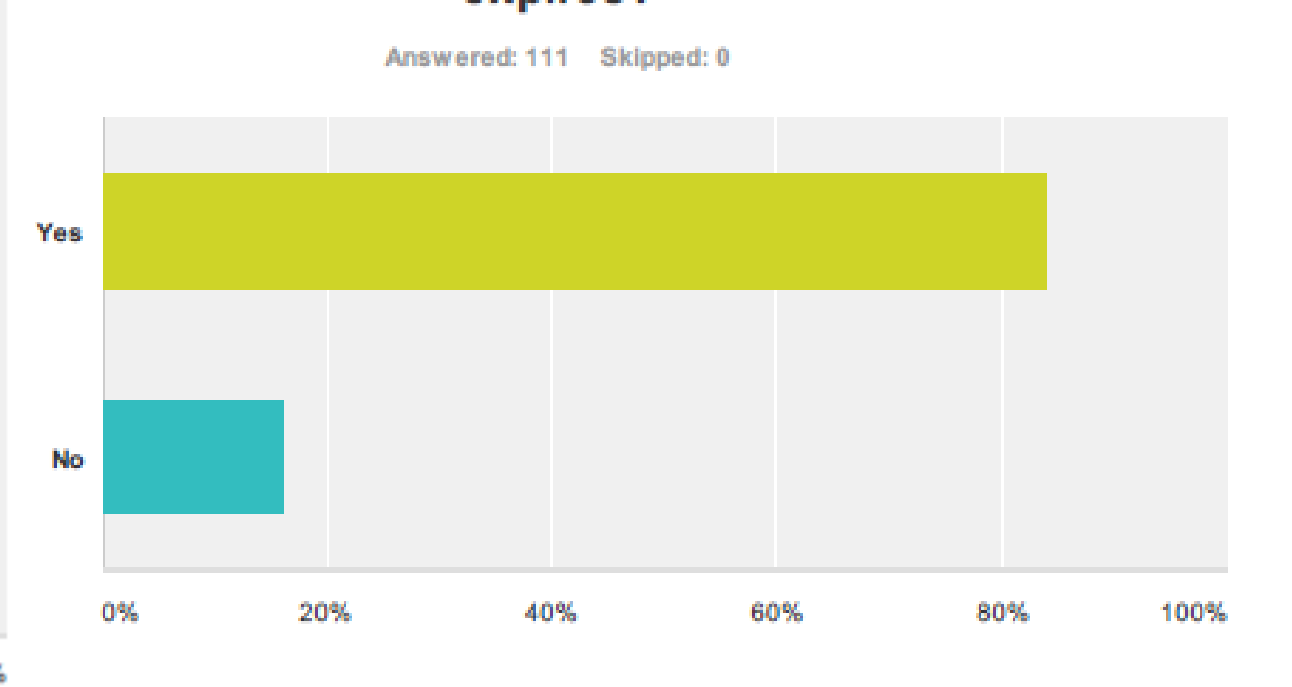
- Of the 111 participants, **94.6% were female** and 5.4% were male.
- The largest age group represented in the data was **31-40** year old group with 35.1%.
- All participants who were APTA members (88.3%) were also Section on Pediatrics Members
- 33.6%** of participants' employer **paid for a percentage** of the ABPTS fees.
 - 16.4% had 100% of ABPTS fees paid for, 2.7% had > 75% paid for, 2.7% had 51%-74 paid for, 5.5% had 26-50% paid for, and 6.4% < 25% paid for
- Half of the participants (49.6%) did not change jobs** after they received a PCS.
 - 23.4% changed jobs after 3 years of receiving a PCS, 6.3% changed positions between 2-3 years, 11.7% between 1-2 years and 9% within 1 year.
- 6.3% reported a title change with the addition of authority while 1.8% reported an increase in authority with no title change. **91.9% did not experience any type of promotion** or increase in authority
- 77.5% of participants did not experience a salary increase within one year of receiving a PCS**
 - 18.9% reported they had a \$1 -\$5,000 salary increase
 - 3.6% reported having a \$5,001-\$10,000 salary increase).
- 13 participants (**15.9%**) reported an **increase in hours spent in direct contact with pediatric patients**
- 25.6%** received **more pediatric referrals** after obtaining a PCS while 74.4% percent did not.
- 83.8% of participants reported that they would renew** their PCS upon expiration, where 16.2% reported they would not.

RESULTS

Q27 I was more satisfied with my career after getting my PCS.



Q28 Will you renew your PCS when it next expires?

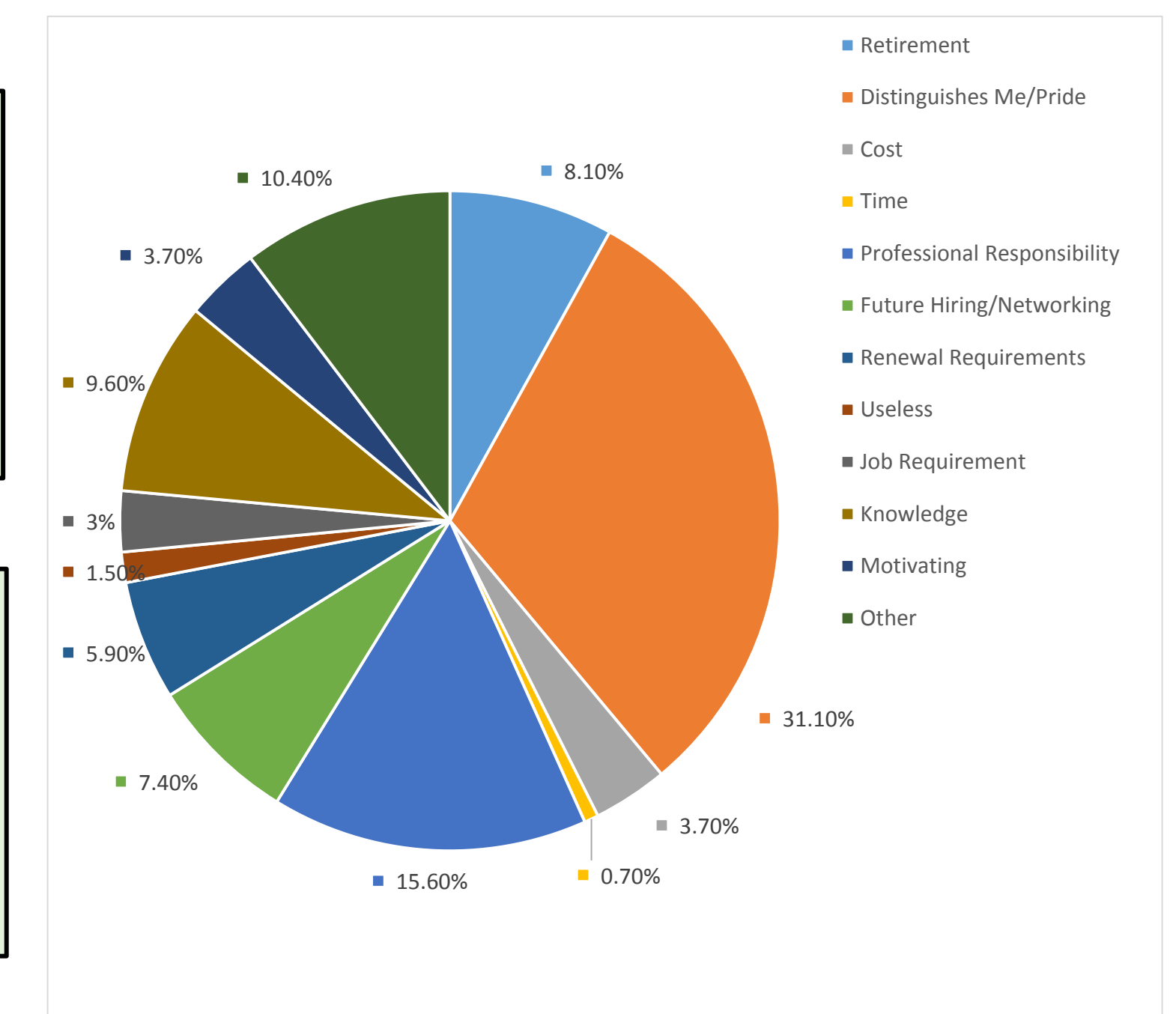


Common Themes for those Planning on Renewing

- Distinguishes me/pride
- Professional responsibility
- Knowledge
- future hiring/networking, motivating
- Job requirement.

Common Themes for those Not Planning on Renewing

- Retiring
- Renewal requirements
- Cost
- Useless
- Time



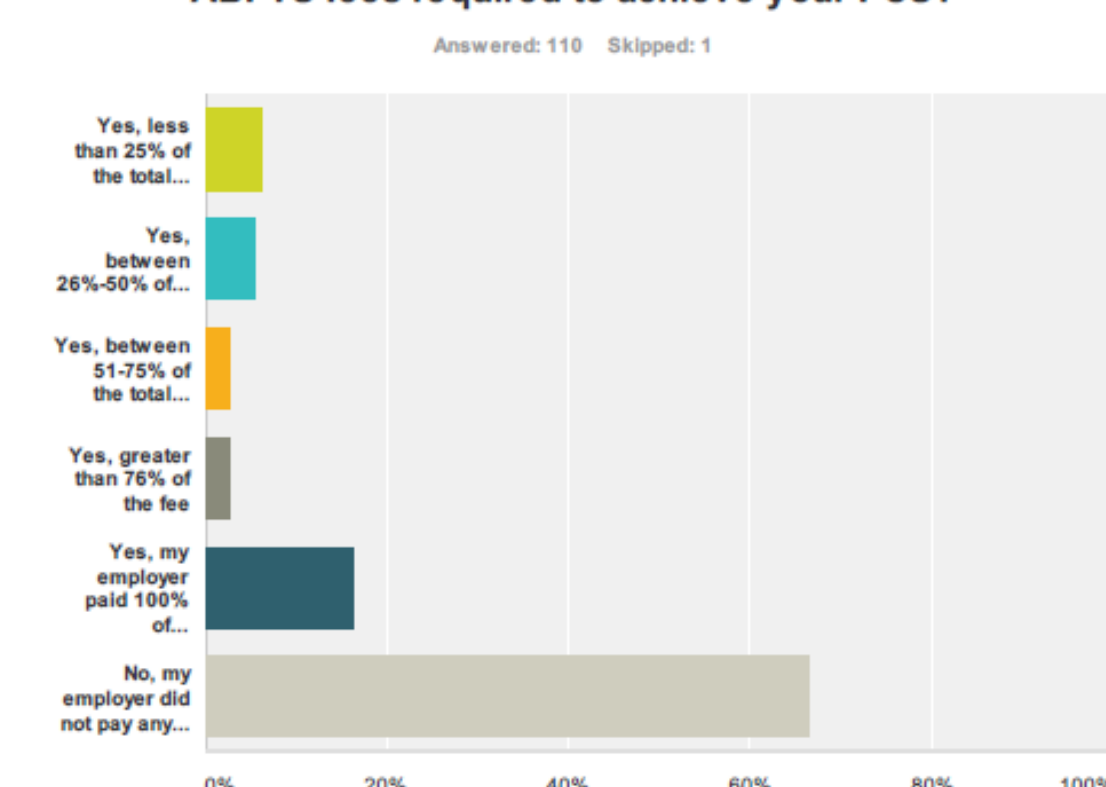
DISCUSSION

- The majority of participants reported having no increase in salary (77.5%), no increase in responsibility/authority (91.9%), no indication of the PCS certification on their name badge (54.1%), and no reimbursement for the ABPTS fees from their employer (66.7%).
- The majority of participants reported no increase in pediatric referrals or direct patient care. The increase in referrals was reported at 25.6%.
- There was also a 15.9% reported increase in direct contact with pediatric patients.
- It would have been expected that these two numbers would have been closer due to the belief that increased referrals would increase direct contact with pediatric patients.

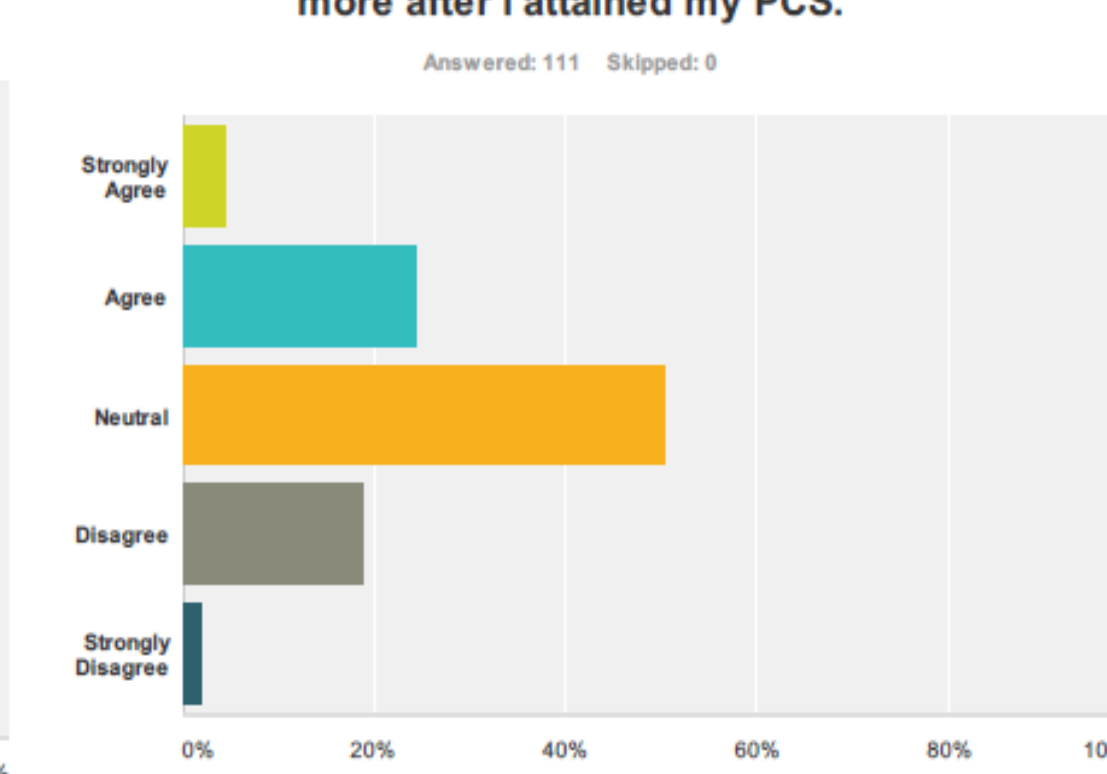
CONCLUSION

- Overall, participants did not experience a change in job status or clinical practice.
- The majority of participants (76.8%) reported they were more satisfied with their career after earning a PCS and 83.8% of participants were planning on renewing.
- A possible explanation for these high percentages are that PCS therapists gain pride and fulfill their sense of professional duty from earning a PCS.
- This hypothesis would be supported by the findings that the top reasons participants planned on renewing were "distinguishes me/pride", "professional responsibility", and "knowledge."
- Participants in this study have demonstrated a significant investment in their field and the intrinsic satisfaction they receive from having a PCS is enough to justify the process of achieving the certification.

Q17 Did your employer pay for any of the ABPTS fees required to achieve your PCS?



Q25 Referring physicians respected me more after I attained my PCS.



Q26 Other physical therapists respected me more after I attained my PCS.

