

Abstract

- This study examines professional issues in the provision of home health care in physical.
- This two part study that implements a grounded theory method with snowball sampling initially interviewing 11 home health physical therapists.
- Therapists targeted for interview came from a range of therapy specialties and experience levels. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the interviewee, transcribed and coded using grounded theory principles.

Results:

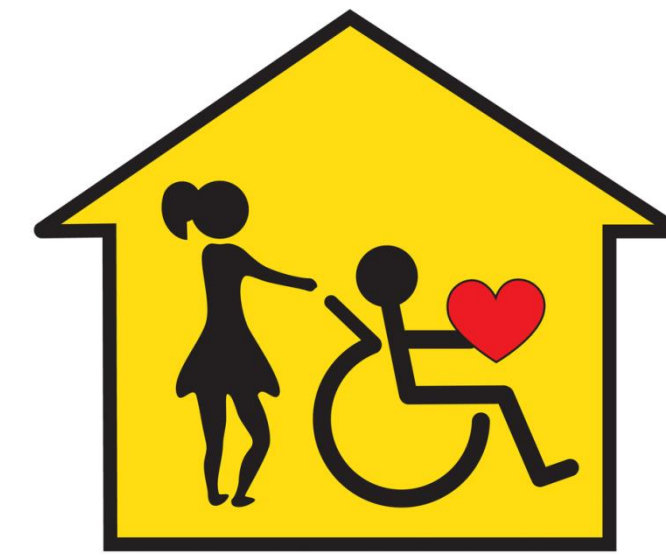
- Major categories identified included work environment, work characteristics, communication, patient and family, and work-life balance.
- Analysis of these categories suggest that factors influencing physical therapists provision of care in the home both positively and negatively most commonly include flexible scheduling, documentation, varied patient case types, accountability, the home environment, fulfillment from providing care in the home and transportation.
- Flexibility in scheduling and the ability to work in a real environment where you can adjust care to the functional environment of the patient were the two most common factors identified.

Discussion:

- Focus groups and more descriptive interview questions should be included in future interviews to help improve the efficiency of the survey as well as to identify more specific factors.
- Factors related to the work structure, corporate culture, and other unidentified categories of factors affecting home care professionals should be explored

Research Questions

1. What professional factors are important to the provision of physical therapy in the home environment for therapists coming into the home health industry for the first time?
2. What type of benefits, barriers, social issues, and other issues do therapists face when providing care in the home?



Participants & Patient Populations

Selection Criteria

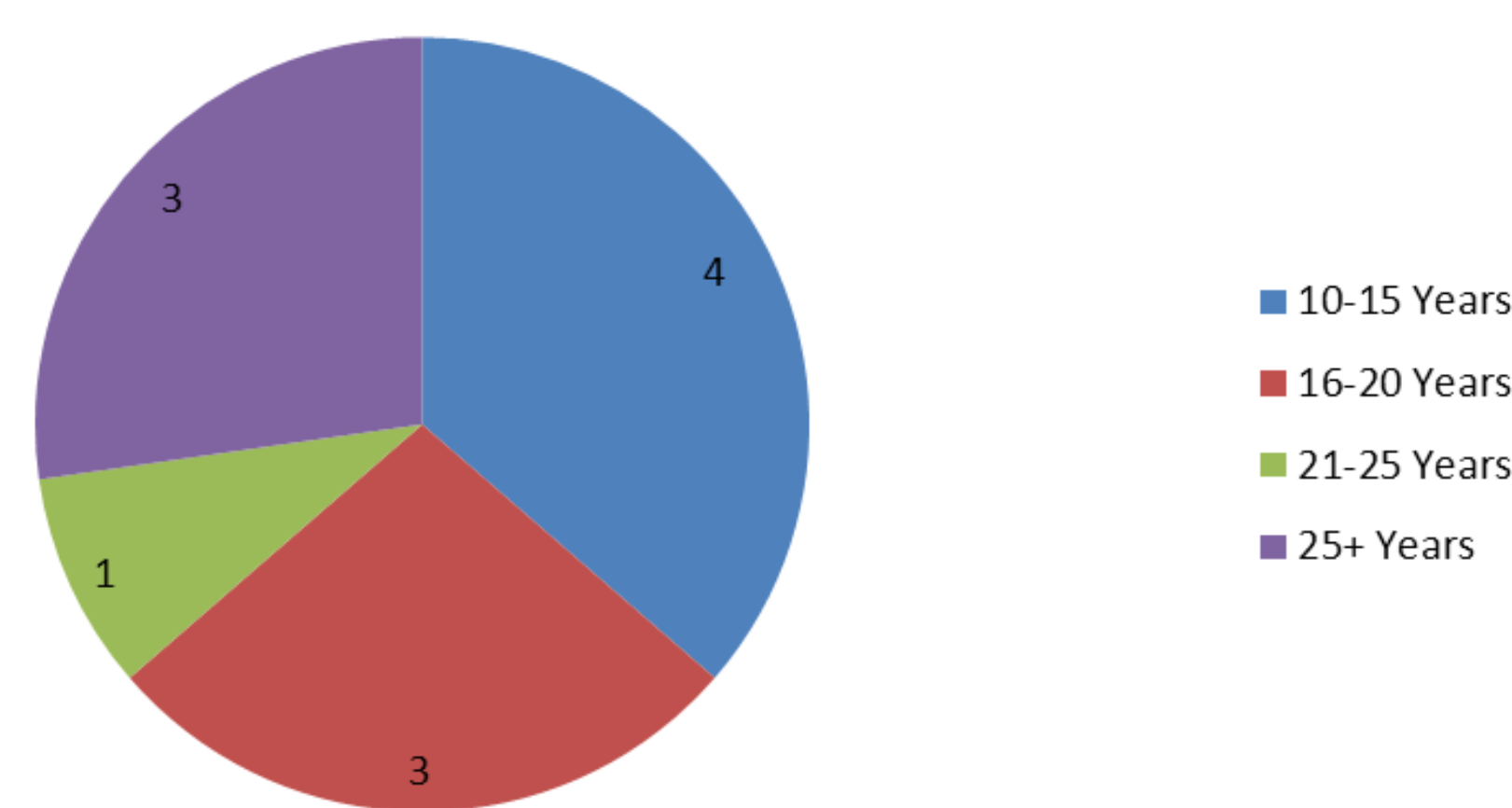
- Participants must have a **minimum of 1 year home health experience or be currently working in that field**
- **Licensed** currently as an OT or PT in good standing

Characteristics

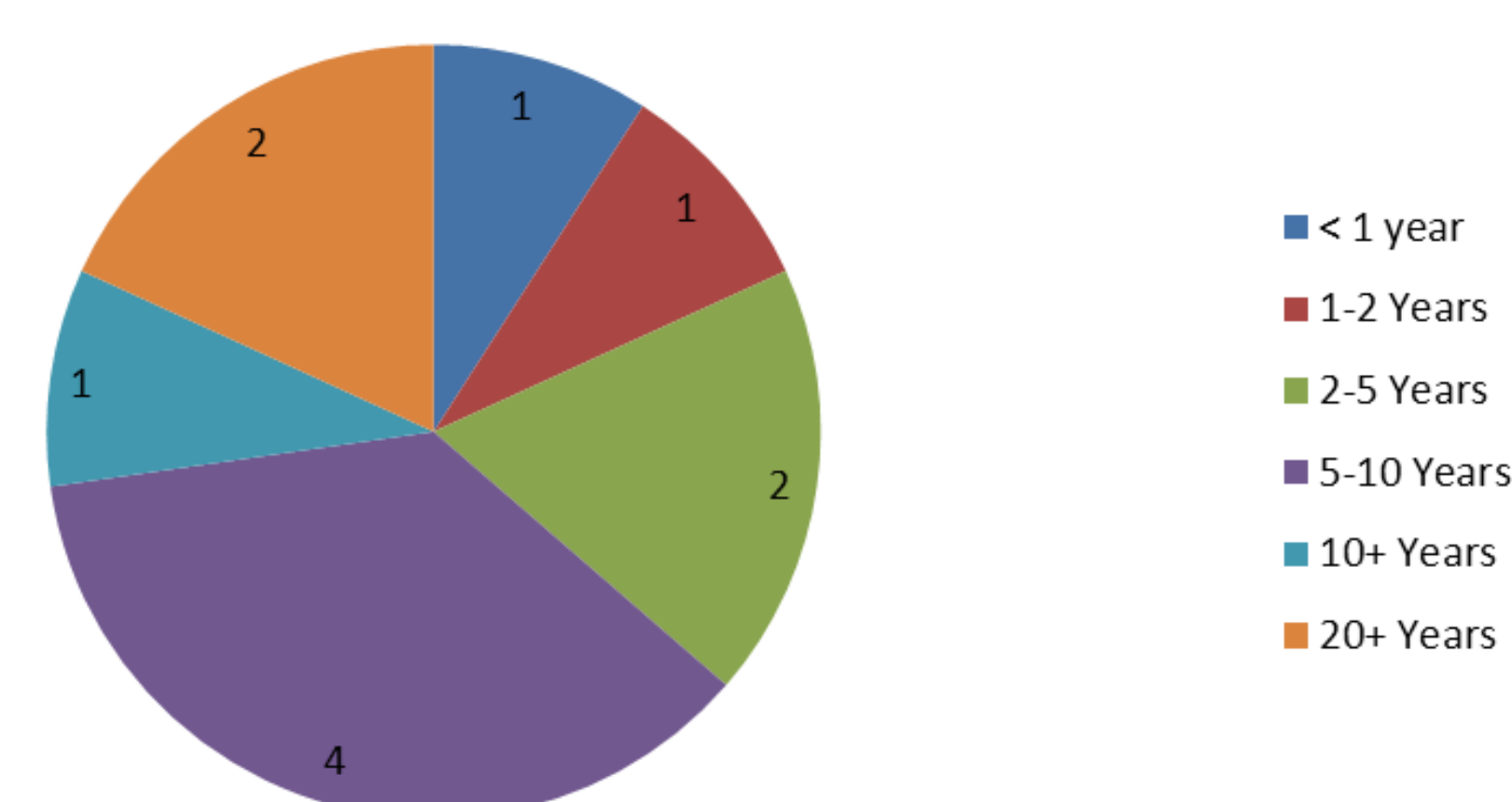
- A majority of the participants have **no specialty or certifications focusing on a population** but rather became experienced in population due to need
- Two therapists had **extensive hospice experience**
- One therapist specialized in **Early Interventions Pediatrics**
- Participants either saw **large variety of patient populations**
- Many had experience with **orthopedics focusing on joint replacements or geriatrics**

Participant Experience Levels

Graph 1: Years of PT Experience



Graph 2: HH Experience



Literature Review

- **People with severe disability make up over half of the elderly population** presenting with general disability³
- Home health services can provide a **positive influence on Quality of Life** and health outcomes¹
- **Challenges to physical therapists and other home care providers take the form of workplace hazards** such as blood borne pathogens, unsanitary conditions, hostile pets, family or patient violence and even an increased risk of musculoskeletal disorders from lifting patients with no assistance.²
- Drug paraphernalia and the presence of family or roommates are important factors to consider when providing not only **therapeutic also socially conscious care**.⁶
- **Care coordination between family, patients, caregivers and physicians is a vital aspect in transitions from hospital to home**, though few models have been developed for home health, and thus there is a need for further research in this area.⁴
- **More research is needed** to further understand the interventions and practices that affect patient outcomes.⁵

Methods

Purposive snowball sampling provided one on one interviews

Participants were asked preliminary questionnaire along with concurrent analysis and probing questions

Notes and analysis began with first interview starting a constant comparative analysis for further questions

Selective Coding was used to formalize major categories and streamline data

Final analysis was performed, limitations identified, and concepts were discussed. Especially outliers.

Results

- Major concepts work environment, work characteristics, communication, patient and family, and work-life balance.
- Factors commonly include flexible scheduling, time consuming documentation, varied patient case types, autonomy, the home environment, family dynamics,
- Flexibility in scheduling and the ability to work in the real functional environment of the patient were the two most common factors identified as positive work characteristics in home health.
- Time consuming documentation, safety concerns, family dynamics, transportation access, drive distance, and lack of resources were the most common negative work characteristics.
- The home environmental factors were found to be factors that act as barriers and facilitators to patient care but also influence the professionalism and work-life balance.
- Family was found to be a large factor in patient participation and effected resources available
- Socioeconomic differences and the need cultural sensitivity/competency can become more pronounced in a patients home
- Accountability and productivity were identified as important traits in home health therapists

Discussion

- Focus groups should be included in future interviews to help improve data collection and identify specific factors related to the major concepts of work environment, work characteristics, communication, patient and family, and work-life balance.
- Focus groups may help to create a dynamic brainstorming environment allow therapists to build off each other answers to the questionnaire
- Keeping the participant focused was key in order to stay on topic as well as to allow concurrent analysis of the data
- Probing questions became hard to avoid when therapists were unable to think of new factors to identify
- The definition of professional issues should be explored in depth and redefined to better assist future research in this area.

References

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