

Submission Id: 2862

Title

Medical Assistant Perceptions of Influences on Job Satisfaction and Job Burnout

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Qualitative research

Presenters

Tristen Hall, MPH

Abstract

Context: MAs (MAs) employed in primary care practices are increasingly expected to perform new and more complex tasks, a phenomenon known as role expansion. Understanding MA perceptions of influences on their job outcomes provides guidance for future quantitative examination of employee outcomes for MAs in both traditional and expanded roles. Objective: Understand MAs' perceptions of the organizational, job, and individual characteristics that influence their employee outcomes, such as job burnout and job satisfaction. Study Design: Qualitative study using focus groups and individual interviews. Setting or Dataset: Primary care and OB/GYN practices in the state of Colorado. Population studied: 20 MAs currently employed as MAs, all female, mean years' experience of 10 years (SD=10.1), mean age of 37 years (SD=13.6), 60% White, 10% American Indian or Alaska Native, 10% mixed race, 5% Black/African American, 15% other race; 50% Hispanic/Latino, 85% employed in primary care, 65% working in system-owned practice, 70% employed in practice with more than five clinicians. Outcome Measures: Themes in factors contributing to MA job satisfaction, job burnout, and other positive and negative employee outcomes. Results: Participants described how a heavy and seemingly ever-increasing workload contributed to burnout and feelings of overwhelm. Comments about a heavy workload were commonly intertwined with the influences of low pay and a lack of recognition for MA roles from providers, clinic leadership, and broad society. However, support from coworkers and leadership could help to prevent or alleviate these negative feelings and contribute to more positive employee outcomes. Other positive influences on employee outcomes included helping and developing relationships with patients, the opportunity to learn from the job, the high level of responsibility allowing MAs to work to the highest appropriate level for their training, and wide variety of duties involved in the work. Conclusions: According to MAs, low pay, increasing workloads, and a lack of recognition and respect for their role contribute negatively to their employee outcomes. However, emotional and instrumental support from colleagues and management can buffer these influences to alleviate burnout, contribute to job satisfaction, and help prevent turnover. Systematic efforts to recognize the contributions of MAs and provide other forms of organizational support could improve job satisfaction among MAs.