

Reviewer's report

Title: National trends of physician assistant workforce: 1980 to 2007 U.S. Surveys

Version: 1 **Date:** 6 August 2009

Reviewer: David Auerbach

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript is a very thorough look at a profession that has surely not been analyzed in this depth across time before. The trends are displayed and discussed in great detail.

Minor essential, bordering on major:

The main thing I felt the paper was lacking was some context to the trends, however. Many of the changes discussed are things that have occurred across the US, such as the aging of the population via the baby boom, the increased diversity, the increase in levels of education, etc. It would be much more useful to present many of the trend analysis alongside data on the general US population, or as comparisons to other professions such as RNs, where much similar information has been published in the literature that could serve as a point of comparisons. Then, the trends that might be specific to health care or PA's could be identified and reasons could be suggested.

Discretionary:

What I found most interesting and helpful was some of the discussion about state differences in regulations governing PA practice. Those differences should be more directly related to PA per population numbers (such as in a table or graph) to at least tease out the possible relationship there. Or a relationship with schools or education resources which was also suggested could be helpful to draw out further. (note: the state-by state table (Table 3) would be easier to read if it ranked states not alphabetically, but rather, in order of PA's per population).

Thanks for the opportunity to review.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests