



The Power of Pivoting:

Deconstructing Misconceptions In Primary Care

Theresa Riethle, MS, PA-C; Marie Meckel, MPH, PA-C; Alisa Ainbinder, PhD, MSW; Dawn Gurski, BS

Purpose:

Identify physician assistant student perceptions of careers in primary care.

Methods:

- Utilization of HRSA goals in the development and implementation of new didactic curricula
- Qualitative and Quantitative methods were used to examine primary care topics through focus groups, pre-post surveys, and reflection papers to determine changes in student perspectives.

Results:

- Four main misconceptions about primary care were identified through thematic analysis of focus groups and reflective essays.
 - Lower salaries and/or benefits
 - More demanding workload
 - Increased level of challenges over other specialties
 - Less prestigious
- Pre-post classroom surveys were bookended around a primary care panel
- Data was summarized using descriptive statistics
 - 36% positive increase in overall perception
 - 31% pre vs 67% post
 - 16% decrease in negative perceptions
 - 27% pre vs 11% post
 - 56% improvement in the perception of lower salaries in primary care
 - 96% pre vs 40% post

Discussion

- Early curricular introduction to primary care careers allows the opportunity to dispel myths, promote the specialty, and provide mentors in the field.
- Limitations include: Participants were from one Northeast PA program, surveys were self-reported, and the panel members have a tie to the program.

Student misconceptions regarding primary care as **less prestigious, with lower pay and a more demanding workload** are reexamined with a simple intervention



Student Quotes

“Primary care may not be the most glamorous of fields, but it can be one of the most impactful. Knowing that has broadened how I see primary care health.”

“ I think PAs should use caution and introspection about the value they will receive when picking a primary specialty, which cannot be weighed by salary or social rank alone.”

“My thoughts have not changed on primary care since the discussion panel or reviewing the articles. This is solely because I do not think I would be a great primary care provider.”

“I was pleased to hear that there was not a huge disparity in pay.”