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A Descriptive Analysis of Non-PA Principal Faculty in PA Education

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Introduction

- 12.9% of PA faculty and 9.0% of PA program directors are not themselves PAs.¹
- Little research to date has specifically examined this portion of the PA faculty workforce.
- Research on PA faculty retention has largely focused on retention of the clinical PA in academia.^{2,3}

Principal PA program faculty who are not themselves PAs will be referred to as “non-PA faculty” in this study.

Purpose

- To describe the characteristics of non-PA faculty in PA programs and to examine whether there are differences between faculty in PA programs who are and are not PAs in terms of their demographics, intention to leave, and perceptions of burnout.

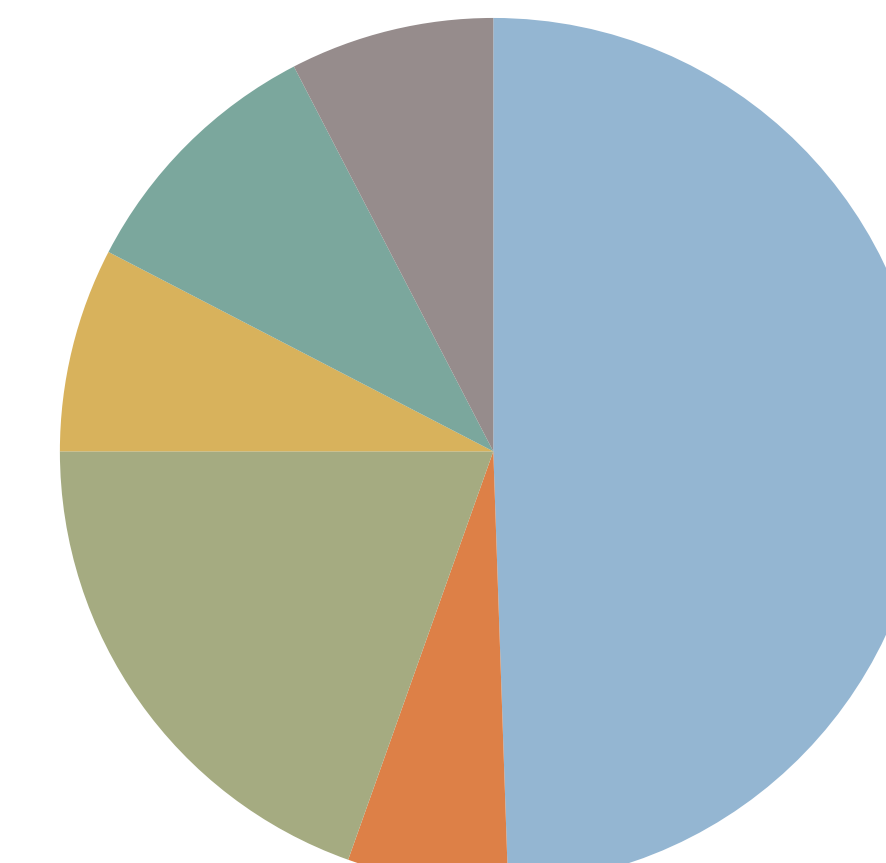
Methods

- **Secondary analysis** of data from the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) 2019 Faculty and Director’s Survey.
 - Raw data from this survey was obtained from the PAEA to answer the specific research questions of this study.
 - Participants were PA faculty in the 243 PAEA member programs.
 - Previous secondary analysis of data from the 2015 PAEA Faculty and Director’s Survey^{4,5} was used to evaluate trends.
 - There were 1,246 responses to the survey, for an estimated individual response rate of 60.5%.¹
- **Data Analysis**
 - SPSS⁶ was used to perform simple descriptive statistics to describe non-PA faculty, including demographic and professional characteristics. Chi-square analyses and independent t-tests were conducted to detect associations between PA faculty status (non-PA vs. PA) and other dichotomized variables (e.g., intention to leave) and continuous variables (e.g., age), respectively.

Results

Degrees Held by Non-PA Faculty

Note: 1 additional respondent marked bachelor’s degree as highest degree earned.



*Other doctorate degrees included

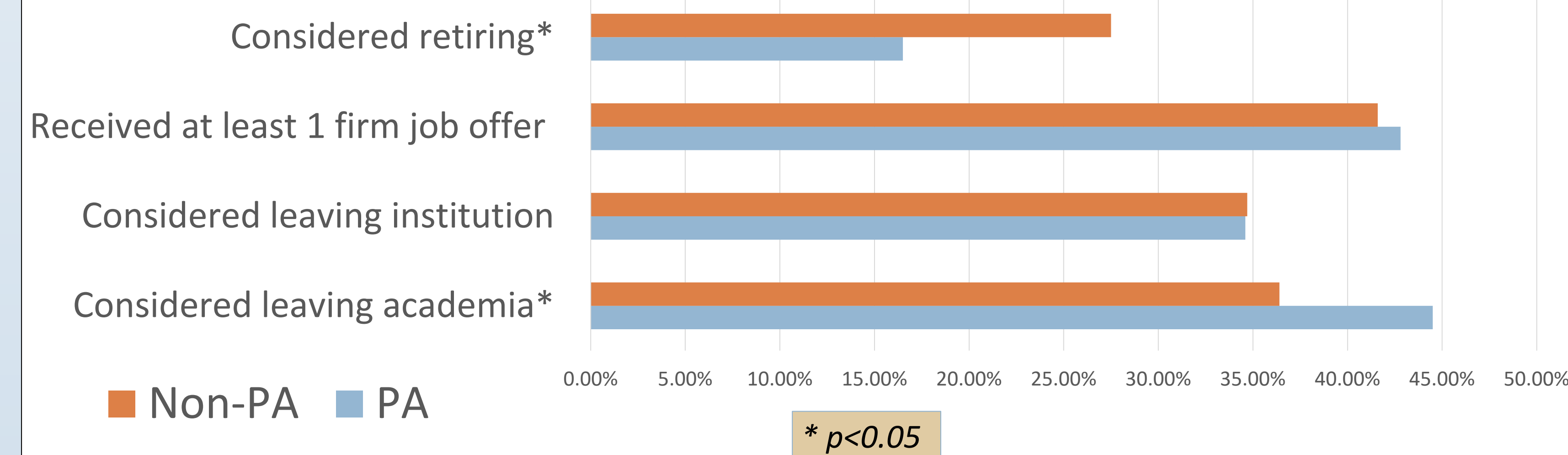
- 1 DHSc
- 2 DrPH
- 1 EdD
- 1 JD
- 9 other doctoral degrees not listed

■ MD ■ DO ■ PhD ■ PharmD ■ Masters ■ Other doctorate*

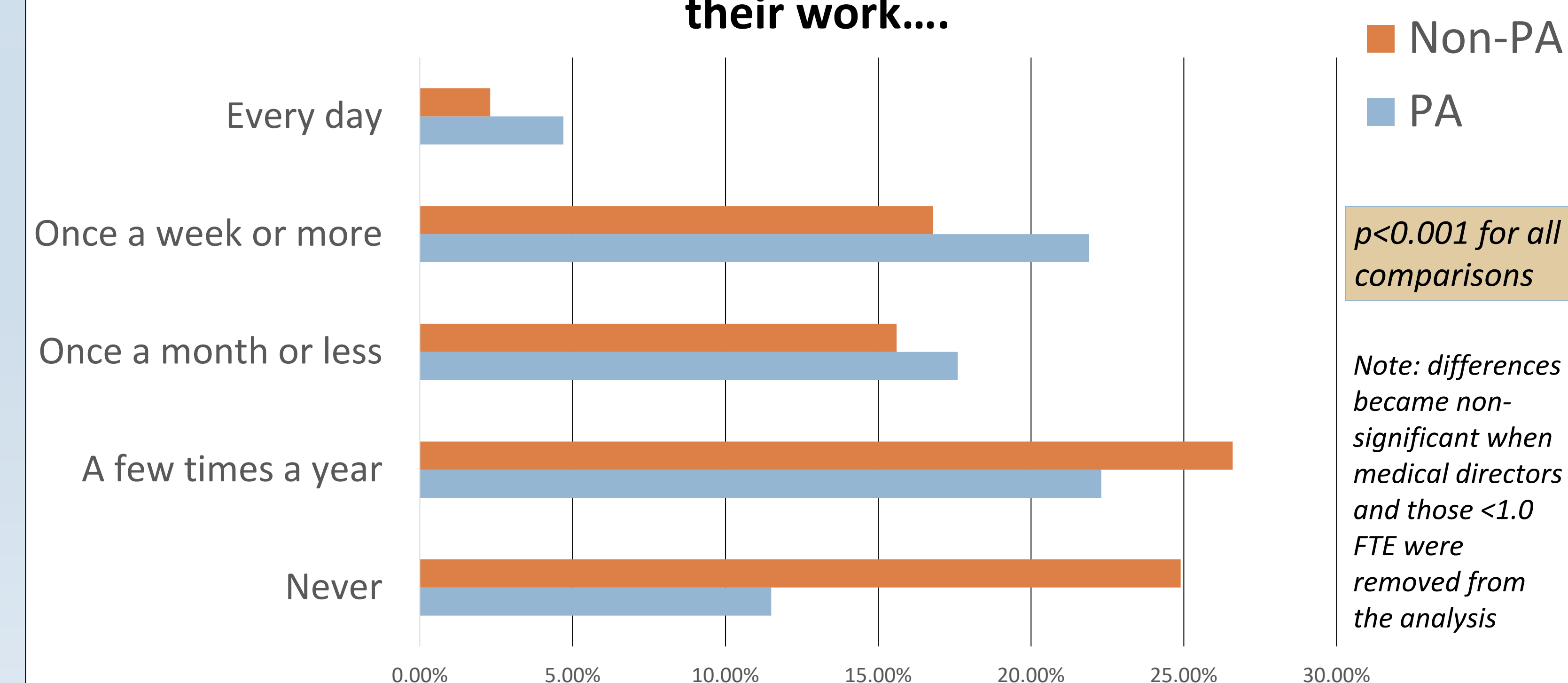
Non-PA Faculty Demographics (n=185):

- 47.6% female
- 11.5% from populations underrepresented in medicine
- Mean age of 52.6 years, with 25.9% over age 60
 - Vs. mean age of 45.5 for PA faculty, $p < .001$
- 74.8% were 1.0 FTE in PA program.

Comparison of Intent to Leave: In the past 2 years, the faculty member had...



Percent of faculty who endorsed feeling burned out from their work....



Results

- Non-PAs accounted for 15.7% of all survey respondents, down from 18.3% in 2015.
- Non-PA faculty were more likely to be of a higher academic rank than PA faculty ($p < .001$), however there was no significant difference between the groups in tenure or longevity in current program (a change from the 2015 data).
- There were some differences in factors that influenced non-PA faculty vs. PA faculty to work for their current program.
 - “Research opportunities” were a more important influence for non-PA faculty ($p < .001$).
 - As in 2015, non-PA faculty were less likely to rate income and fringe benefits as important influences ($p < .001$).

Discussion

- A significant number of non-PAs are employed as principal faculty in PA programs. There are some differences in the factors that motivated these faculty to take their current positions.
- The large number of non-PA faculty considering retirement is likely to compound the PA faculty shortage in the coming years.
- Future research should build on these findings by more specifically examining the added value and potential challenges of non-PAs in PA education.
- Limitations of this study include possible non-response bias and pre-pandemic data collection.

References and Acknowledgement

These data were provided by the Physician Assistant Education Association, Washington, DC. Provision of these data does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of the findings of this research report [presentation] by the Physician Assistant Education Association.



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