

Pilot Testing a Survey Tool to Characterize Medical Assistant Job Roles

Tristen Hall, MPH^{1,2}

¹PhD(c), Health & Behavioral Sciences, University of Colorado Denver

²Senior Professional Research Assistant, Department of Family Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Background

- Medical assistants (MAs) employed in primary care practices are increasingly expected to perform new and more complex tasks (“role expansion”).
- A standardized method to measure job roles is needed to measure outcomes related to job types.
- Measuring MA job roles improves our ability to demonstrate MAs’ contribution to care teams.
- This study pilot tests a survey to categorize MA job roles as “expanded” or “traditional” using tasks performed.

Methods

- Design: Survey pilot test and semi-structured interviews; initial phase of exploratory sequential mixed methods study.
- Setting & Participants: MAs employed in primary care practices throughout Colorado.

Participant Characteristics (N=13)	%
<i>Practice Setting</i>	
Outpatient	85%
System-Owned Practice	62%
Size: >5 Providers	54%
<i>Participant Background</i>	
>5 Years Employed as MA	62%
Female	100%

Results

Pilot Survey Questions

Thinking about your job as an MA, please indicate whether you perform each of the below activities in a typical work week. (Yes/No)

Administrative tasks

Preparation for clinical examination

Health coaching or self-management support/education

Medical scribing

Patient outreach and/or registry management

Care coordination

- All participants performed “expanded role” tasks (mean=2.3 of possible 4 tasks, range=1-4)
- **46%** of participating MAs reported **job burnout**.
- Mean **job satisfaction** was **high** at 6.4 (of possible 7)
- MAs commonly highlighted the importance of social support from coworkers and providers to support job satisfaction and prevent burnout.

Conclusions

- A dichotomous measure of traditional vs. expanded job roles may not be sensitive enough to distinguish between role types.
- Number of expanded role tasks performed may be a better measure of job role expansion than performance of any expanded role tasks.
- Large-scale survey will illuminate the relationship between role type, practice and MA characteristics, and job outcomes.