



Ontario Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists employment satisfaction ratings by sub-sector



Purpose

Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Physiotherapists (PTs) deliver rehabilitative services in a variety of sub-sectors, including hospitals/long-term care (LTC) institutions, the community, private clinics, schools, and industry. Recent health policies have encouraged shifting the site of care from hospitals to the home and community. The purpose of this study is to determine if job satisfaction for OTs and PTs varies by sub-sectors.

Methods

A survey of OTs and PTs was conducted in 2003 by the Medicare To Home and Community (M-THAC) Research Unit at the University of Toronto in partnership with the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario and the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. The survey, which systematically sampled 1 in 5 PTs and 1 in 3 OTs, collected information on demographic characteristics, employment characteristics and employment satisfaction, recognizing the possibility of multiple employers. Satisfaction questions asked "Thinking overall about your work for each Employer, how satisfied were you with your:" income, employment security, work schedule, employment benefits, professional relationship with clients, ability to make the best clinical decisions, ability to integrate current innovations and evidence into practice, ability to balance work with personal life, and your employment overall. These were measured on a 5-point scale (from 5=very satisfied to 1=very dissatisfied).

The OTs and PTs were categorized into three sub-sectors for the purpose of conducting analyses:

- 1) **Hospitals/LTC Institutions;**
- 2) **Community;** and
- 3) **Other** (private clinic, education and industry).

Sub-sectors for primary employer were compared using one-way ANOVA. Statistically significant differences are indicated in Tables 1 and 2.

Results

Response rates were 64.3% (OTs) and 58.5% (PTs). Primary employer by sub-sectors for OTs were: Hospitals/LTC Institutions (n = 262); Community (n = 190); Other (n = 179); for PTs were: Hospitals/ LTC Institutions (n = 246); Community (n = 222); Other (n = 117). Most respondents were female (94.1% of OTs and 86.9% of PTs) and had baccalaureate degrees (86.7% of OTs and 76.7% of PTs). Mean age was 39.5 for OTs and 42.8 for PTs.

OTs' views on employment satisfaction

In general, OTs are fairly satisfied with their employment. Table 1 reports mean satisfaction (on the 1-5 scale) overall, and for each sub-sector, and the statistical significance of ANOVAs comparing sub-sectors. Highest satisfaction was with professional relationship with clients; this did not vary across sub-sectors. Non-hospital OTs were least satisfied with their ability to make the best clinical decisions. Those in the Community had highest satisfaction with income; however, OTs who worked in Hospitals/LTC Institutions had significantly higher satisfaction with employment benefits (although this was still relatively low), and ability to balance work/personal life.

Category	Hospitals/LTC Institutions	Community	Other	Overall
Income (p=.019)	3.28	3.55	3.32	3.39
Employment security (p=.06)	3.70	3.56	3.39	3.59
Work schedule (p=.13)	4.02	4.02	3.82	3.98
Employment benefits (p<.001)	3.31	2.86	3.16	3.12
Professional relationship with clients (p=.81)	4.28	4.32	4.33	4.30
Ability to make the best clinical decisions (p=.02)	3.95	4.15	4.07	4.05
Ability to integrate current innovations and evidence into practice (p=.10)	3.52	3.67	3.71	3.61
Ability to balance work with personal life (p=.002)	3.71	3.51	3.31	3.56
Employment overall (p=.23)	3.81	3.88	3.73	3.82

PTs' views on employment satisfaction

PTs showed similar patterns to OTs, although they had somewhat higher levels of satisfaction. Again, the highest ratings were given to professional aspects, including professional relationship with clients and ability to make the best clinical decisions. PTs in the Community also showed the most satisfaction with income, whereas PTs who worked in Hospitals/LTC Institutions were most satisfied with employment benefits, and ability to balance work/life.

Category	Hospitals/LTC Institutions	Community	Other	Overall
Income (p=.01)	3.36	3.64	3.60	3.51
Employment security (p=.41)	3.76	3.77	3.90	3.80
Work schedule (p=.18)	4.07	3.95	3.90	3.99
Employment benefits (p<.001)	3.51	3.02	2.80	3.17
Professional relationship with clients (p=.70)	4.53	4.58	4.55	4.55
Ability to make the best clinical decisions (p=.21)	4.25	4.34	4.37	4.31
Ability to integrate current innovations and evidence into practice (p=.52)	3.93	3.99	4.02	3.97
Ability to balance work with personal life (p=.04)	3.92	3.72	3.69	3.79
Employment overall (p=.70)	4.04	3.98	4.03	4.02

Discussion

Employment satisfaction ratings vary by sub-sector for both OTs and PTs. The different sub-sectors appear to have different positive and negative attributes; those in Hospitals/LTC Institutions had significantly higher satisfaction with their employment benefits and work/life balance, but lower satisfaction with their direct income.

Further research is needed in order to determine which factors are most important to the recruitment and retention of rehabilitation professionals.

An important finding is that the population surveyed showed high satisfaction with the professional aspects of their practice. Income, security, benefits, and work/life balance, all integral factors for "healthy" Health Human Resource workforce appear potentially more problematic. Not only are the overall ratings relatively low (near the neutral point on the scale), but Hospitals/LTC institutions show the highest values for benefits and work/life balance, suggesting that the shift from hospitals may be accompanied by deterioration in the benefits available to workers. Judging from the overall satisfaction ratings, employment in the non-hospital sectors is relatively attractive overall, despite the gap between the levels of satisfaction with professional elements and wages/working conditions. A longitudinal analysis of job satisfaction of the therapists moving from institution to community is required.

Further analysis in partnership with College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario and College of Physiotherapists of Ontario is being conducted to analyze the factors that are associated with the retention of these health care professionals--both within their profession, and within their sub-sector.

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Further results will be posted on the CIHR Team in Community Care and Health Human Resources' web site at: <http://www.teamgrant.ca>

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