



PHYSIOTHERAPY NEW ZEALAND
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Interim report on new graduate survey 2014 – first cohort

Background

In 2013 representatives from the Physiotherapy Board, Physiotherapy New Zealand and the Schools of Physiotherapy at the University of Otago and Auckland University of Technology met to establish a framework for a prospective longitudinal cohort study of New Zealand physiotherapy graduates. The study includes graduates from 2013, 2014 and 2015 and will follow their employment and career patterns over five years. Below is the interim report from the initial survey of the first cohort of graduates. Ethical approval was gained for the study from the University of Otago and the Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

Initial cohort

203 new graduates from New Zealand schools were eligible for registration in the year between July 2013 and the end of June 2014. Seven had not registered – five were included in the survey as they had known email addresses but two were not as they had no contact addresses. Thus 201 potential participants were emailed inviting them to participate in the survey.

The survey was opened on 24/07/14 and closed on 04/09/14.

116 (58%) of physiotherapists eligible responded. There were similar numbers from the AUT and Otago Schools of Physiotherapy.

Demographics

Females made up approximately two thirds (67%) of respondents, which is similar to the proportion of females currently practising in the profession.

The average age was 26 (SD 5.6y)

The percentages of ethnic groups differed slightly from the physiotherapy national census data for 2013 reported in the Board's Workforce Supply Projections, 2014 – 2035 report ("The Physiotherapy Workforce - Workforce Supply Projections, 2014 - 2035," 2014)

European 76% (85%)

Asian 15% (6%)

Māori 4% (5%)

Pacific Island 3%

Professional Association membership

Nearly 80% of the respondents indicated they belonged to their professional body viz. Physiotherapy New Zealand.

Practising as a physiotherapist

Ninety eight percent of respondents (111) were working as a physiotherapist. Of the four who were not, two were still looking for work, one waiting to start and one doing other tertiary level study although they all planned to work as a physiotherapist in some capacity in the next three years.

Finding employment

Eighty four percent started looking for a job prior to graduation, and of those 49% had a confirmed job at graduation. The remainder seeking jobs were all looking within two months post-graduation; a further 30% had a job within a month and 25% within the two month time frame. The majority (45%) found a job through personal contact, 21% though the Physiotherapy New Zealand website and 20% through DHB websites. Twelve percent of Otago students used the student web page (Blackboard) and only 12% used a generic website: Seek. To get their first job 72% sent in their CV, 54% completed the application process online and 70% had face to face interviews with 20% being interviewed over the telephone.

Registration:

All but 3 respondents were registered in NZ and 10 had also registered in Australia.

Ninety two percent were employed as physiotherapists in NZ. Eight respondents were employed in Australia.

Preparation for the first job

On a scale of 0-10, 88% of new graduates who responded to the survey rated personal preparedness for obtaining a physiotherapy job at ≥ 5 and 36% indicated a rating of ≥ 8 . The areas where they indicated they were least prepared included CV writing and paperwork for ACC. In response to the question "How well did the University prepare you for the process?" on the same scale 84% rated their preparation at ≥ 5 and 26% of the ratings were ≥ 8 . The areas that they would have liked to be more prepared for related to taxation and contracting and well as interview skills.

Types of work situations

Participants were asked to describe the sort of job they had in mind as their "ideal job". Of 111 respondents 46% indicated they wanted a hospital rotational job and 31.5% stated they wanted a job a private practice, which may or may not have included sport and musculoskeletal work. Others were non specific or wanted to work in a particular area. They were then asked to relate their actual job to their ideal job and 58% stated that "they nailed it", "it was the ideal job" or "I got what I wanted". The majority of others indicated "they were happy with their job", "the particular position was not available at the time they applied", or they "had the choice and opted for something else". Respondents were then asked to outline their first job or combination of jobs. Sixty seven of 111 respondents (61%) stated they worked in the musculoskeletal area and 31 (28%) in rotational positions. Nineteen percent indicated they had a second job. They were then asked to select the boxes that corresponded to the areas where they carry out their work: 70% indicated private

practice, 29% stated DHB hospitals and 23% stated they worked with sports teams. A small number (8%) worked in aged care facilities and 4% in private hospitals.

Hours of work

The majority of respondents (61%) stated they worked 35-40h/week in their primary job; 30% worked ≥40h/week and a few were part time. For the second job (16 respondents) 50% of these worked <10h/week and the rest worked between 10 and 40 h/week. Of the 77 who responded “Yes” to the question “Do you undertake weekend/on call work?” 35% worked with sports teams, 27% in ICU and acute hospital work and 10% in private practices. On a scale of 0-10 for preparedness (0 being not prepared at all), 87% responded at a level of ≥5 and 43% were at a level of ≥8.

Current work situation

Eighty percent of respondents stated they worked in groups or integrated teams and 10% stated they worked in isolation. However 9 out of the 10 respondents working in isolation were receiving mentorship support from a senior physiotherapist. Overall, 42% stated they were in formal supervision and 6% of respondents stated that they were receiving no support in their first year of practice. The vast majority of graduates (83%) indicated that they were well prepared for the transition from being students to being in the workforce, although some reported being unprepared for some aspects of private practice work. Over three-quarters of the respondents had experienced an inter-professional clinical placement as a student and this was also the case for 69% in their clinical careers.

Satisfaction with current employment

The new graduates who responded to the survey were very satisfied with their current employment. On a scale of 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied) the average rating was 9.18. The main factors impacting on their job satisfaction were peer support and mentoring, and professional development opportunities; they enjoyed working with people and knowing they were helping them, while acknowledging they found the work role challenging.

Salary range

Eighty three percent were earning a salary within the range \$40,000 - \$59,000, with 10% earning \$60,000 - \$79,000. Remuneration levels were not highly ranked on the list of the factors influencing their job satisfaction.

Satisfaction with physiotherapy as a career

The majority of respondents were enjoying working in the profession (93% agreed vs 2% disagreed) and 90% of respondents were looking forward to continuing their work as physiotherapists (3% were not); 85% would recommend a career in physiotherapy to others (3% would not). When asked “What is your main reason for wanting to work as a physiotherapist?” respondents stated that the opportunity for social interaction, to work ‘hands on’ and ‘help people’ came through strongly; working with interesting clients, opportunities for ongoing learning, and being active in their jobs were also consistent themes.

Summary

Overall the responses from the new graduates indicated a high level of satisfaction with preparedness for the job market, seeking and obtaining their first job and meeting the expectations of their first experiences as physiotherapists in the workforce.

The research team are grateful to the respondents for their participation. Further surveys will be carried out with the cohort and with a second cohort of new graduates in 2015. It is intended that the study will be published as a formal report once comparative data are available and a final report will be prepared at the completion of the study.

References

The Physiotherapy Workforce - Workforce Supply Projections, 2014 - 2035. (2014). Wellington: The Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand. <http://www.physioboard.org.nz/workforce/>