Job Satisfaction and Retention of Cancer Registrars in Central Registries

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Study Coauthors

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UCSF Center for the Health Professions

- Established at the University of California, San Francisco in 1992, grew out of the Pew Health Professions Commission (1989-1999)
- Conducted studies focused on allied health professions since 1995
- Audience includes health care professionals, educators, care delivery organizations, policy makers, and consumers
Why study Cancer Registrars?

• Frontline personnel in cancer data collection and management: impact on research, education, and treatment

• Concerns about recruitment, retention, and future source of workers
Cancer Registrars – Do you know one?
Importance of the study

• Highlights a critical component of the overall cancer workforce

• A significant study for a small association and small group of workers

• Study findings have implications for further study, workforce development, workload standardization, and strategic planning
Purpose and Goals

To develop an understanding of the current Cancer Registry workforce

- Demographic profile
- Factors impacting supply and demand
- Workforce size, projections, vacancy rates
- Education and pathways to enter field
- Career satisfaction and retention
- To compare Cancer Registrars in hospital and central registries
Methods-Focus Groups

• 6 focus groups (2 in-person, 4 telephone)
• 7–10 participants per group; 53 total
• Groups lasted 1.5 hours each (professional facilitator)
• Participants recruited from hospital central registries; certified and non-certified workers
Methods-Key Informant Interviews

30+ interviews were conducted, during a 4 month time period

- Structured in-person and telephone interviews lasting an average of one hour

- Drawn from leadership of professional organizations, employers, educators, and relevant credentialing and accreditation bodies
Methods-Survey

- Survey was developed as a web-based online survey
- 143 item survey was developed
- Sample of 990 respondents was selected from three sources
- Final response rate: 55%
Major Findings and Recommendations
Demographics of Central Registry Respondents Compared to All Respondents

- Mean age = 48.8, Median age = 50 (no difference)
- 88.6% Female (93% overall)
- 83% Caucasian (86% overall)
- Educational preparation
  - 23.8% Associate Degree (35% overall)
  - 52.3% BA or greater (41.4% overall)
  - 23% High school (no diff)
- Time in current job Mean = 7.8 years
  - Median = 5.58 (little diff)
### Average Age of Selected Health Professionals

**Sources:** 2004 National Cancer Registrars Association Online Cancer Registry Workforce Survey and 2003 Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group File

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cancer Registrars</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Hygienists</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dieticians &amp; Nutritionists</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Medical Technicians &amp; Paramedics</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Record Technologists &amp; Technicians</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Practical Nurses</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Therapists</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory Therapists</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Therapists/Pathologists</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Lab Technologists &amp; Technicians</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Mean Hourly Wage, by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Employment</th>
<th>Annual Salary</th>
<th>Hourly Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals and Cancer Centers</td>
<td>$46,123</td>
<td>$18.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Federal Registries</td>
<td>$47,983</td>
<td>$19.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (agencies, self, vendors)</td>
<td>$53,017</td>
<td>$21.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of Job Tasks, All Respondents

- Cancer Committee
- Cancer Conference
- Follow-Up
- Data Analysis
- Administrative
- Quality Assurance
- Abstracting

Legend:
- Regularly/Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never
Frequency of Job Tasks- Central Registry

- Abstracting
- Data Analysis
- Administrative
- Operational
- Quality Assurance

Legend:
- Regularly/Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never
What Cancer Registrars Like About Their Jobs

• The interesting people they get to work with
• The opportunity to learn something new every day
• The respect they receive for the job they do (although not necessarily from their administrators)
• The independence of working basically alone; not being micro-managed
• The precision and exactness of working with data and facts
• The opportunity to travel to other registries (more for central registries)
“I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases”
Job of Cancer Registrar Not Recognized for its Importance

[Pie chart showing percentage of responses to a question about the recognition of the job of Cancer Registrar.]

- 54% Agree Very Much
- 29% Agree Moderately
- 11% Agree Slightly
- 2% Disagree Slightly
- 2% Disagree Moderately
- 2% Disagree Very Much
- Disagree Slightly
- Disagree Moderately
- Disagree Very Much
“I believe that people who have been trained in Cancer Registry have a responsibility to stay in that profession”
“I have too much time invested in Cancer Registry to Change Occupations”

47% Disagree
53% Agree
Planned Retirement or Exit from Field, Central Registrars

- 1-3 Years
- 4-6 Years
- 7-9 years
- 10+ Years

- 40 or less
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61+

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Projected Future Need for Cancer Registrars, All Settings

- Current employment estimate = 7,300
- Projected future need based on increasing population and increased cancer incidence
  - 7,560 in 2010
  - 8,000 in 2020
- 700 shortfall in 15 years, not including retirement
Factors Influencing Workforce Supply and Demand

- Population: Incidence of cancer, aging
- Technology: changes in procedures, reporting requirements, automation
- Replacement: Turnover and retirement
- Requirements- education, certification, pass rates
- Wages
Major Findings: Awareness, Recognition and Reward

• Lack of public awareness
• Lack of recognition as a profession
• Inadequate recognition from cancer community
• Dissatisfaction with salary and rewards
• Little opportunity for career growth

Need toolkits for self advocacy, programs to inform and educate users of cancer data, career and professional growth opportunities
Major Findings:
Educational Pathways and Certification
Workload Standards

- No clear educational pathway
- Lack of incentive or rewards for certification
- Cert exam pass rates vary by route, scores lower in content such as A&P
- Lack of workload standards for abstracting and other job functions

Need professional pathway, certification recognition, workload standards for comparison and monitoring
Major Findings:
Job Satisfaction and Career Commitment
Future Demand for Cancer Registrars

- Job satisfaction high (except salary)
- Career commitment strong
- Job openings intermittent, vary by region, setting
- Trends in population and cancer incidence indicate not enough workers for future demand
- Pending retirement of older workers opens more positions

Need recruitment and retention strategies, salary toolkits, better workforce data
Critical Policy Issues

• It’s about cancer data and the quality of the data
• How to assure highest quality data collected in timely fashion
• How to assure that cancer data continues to be useful in prevention, treatment, education, and research
Resources

UCSF Center for the Health Professions

http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/
This study was made possible with support from the National Cancer Registrars Association