DATA SNAPSHOT: Medical Assistants

Identifying and analyzing available data resources is a crucial step in assessing the supply and distribution of allied health occupations, their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and the adequacy of the supply to meet industry and population needs. The report *Leveraging Data to Monitor the Allied Health Workforce: National Supply Estimates Using Different Data Sources*[1] (the background report for this Data Snapshot) compared national estimates of the supply and characteristics of nine allied health occupations using four national data sources: the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS), both data from the U.S. Census Bureau; the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the National Provider Identifier (NPI) Registry from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' National Plan and Provider Enumeration System. Using the most recent comparable data available from these sources, this Data Snapshot summarizes the national supply size and demographic, educational attainment, and employment information for medical assistants.
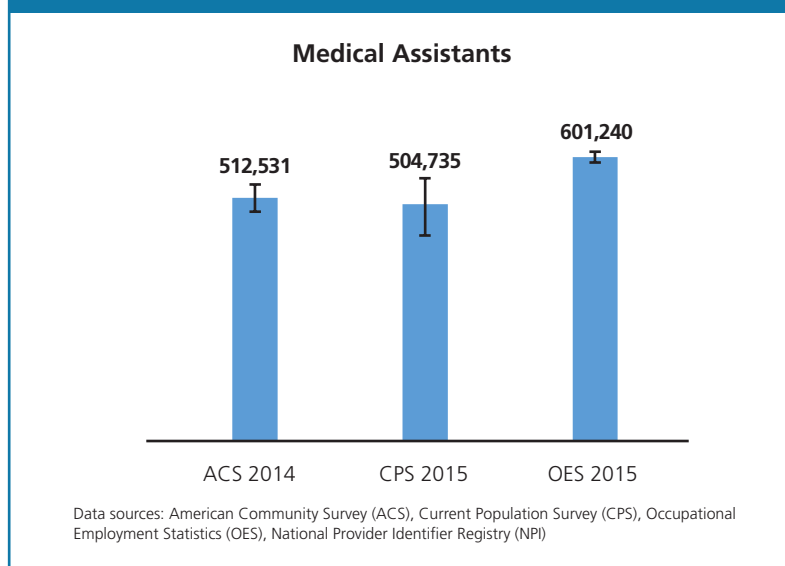
Who are medical assistants? Medical assistants provide help with administrative and clinical jobs in physicians' offices, hospitals, or other medical facilities. Their tasks may vary from site to site, depending on the specialty and size of the practice.[2]

How are medical assistants identified across data sources? Medical assistants, in the ACS and CPS, are identified by the four-digit SOC code, 3645, and in the OES dataset by the occupation code 31-9092, or could be pulled directly from the OES website, data section. In the NPI Registry, there was no specific taxonomy code to identify medical assistants.

National estimates of medical assistants across data sources: Data to estimate the supply of medical assistants were available only in the ACS and CPS data sources. As shown in the figure, the supply estimate of medical assistants from the OES was 601,240 (±9,504), from the ACS was 512,531 (±17,956), and from the CPS was 504,735 (±58,708).

Estimated national supply of medical assistants from the ACS, OES, and CPS data sources

Medical Assistants

ACS 2014: 512,531
CPS 2015: 504,735
OES 2015: 601,240

Data sources: American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), National Provider Identifier Registry (NPI)

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics: The table below provides information on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of medical assistants from the ACS, CPS and OES data sources. The mean age of medical assistants was similar in the ACS and CPS: 37.1 to 38.4 years. The vast majority, between 90.8 to 94.4% were women. In terms of racial and ethnic composition, slightly over 50% were White, not Hispanic as reported in both datasets. From 13.2 to 14.3% reported being Black, not Hispanic, and about a quarter (27.9% in ACS and 23.0% in CPS) reported being Hispanic. Half or fewer medical assistants reported being married (46.6% in ACS and 49.3% in CPS). Both the ACS and CPS data indicated that about two-thirds of medical assistants had some level of college, but not a bachelor's degree. Medical assistants' mean annual earnings, adjusted to 2015 U.S. dollars, was lowest as estimated from the ACS ($28,500) and highest from the OES ($31,910). Their mean hours worked per week was 38.1 and 39.6 hours in the CPS and ACS, respectively. The percent of medical assistants working full-time estimated from ACS data was 86.0%, and 85.2% from CPS.

REFERENCES:

1. Skillman SM, Dahal A, Frogner BK, Stubbs BA. Leveraging Data to Monitor the Allied Health Workforce: National Supply Estimates Using Different Data Sources. Center for Health Workforce Studies, University of Washington, Dec 2016.

2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition*, Medical Assistants. http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/medical-assistants.htm Accessed November 04, 2016.

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of medical assistants

	ACS 2014	CPS 2015	OES 2015
Age (mean years)	37.1	38.4	--
Female	90.8%	94.4%	--
Race/Ethnicity			
White, not Hispanic	52.6%	52.9%	--
Black, not Hispanic	13.2%	14.3%	--
Other, not Hispanic	6.3%	8.5%	--
Hispanic	27.9%	23.0%	--
Marital Status			
Married	46.6%	49.3%	--
Divorce/Separated/Widowed	18.3%	22.1%	--
Single	35.1%	28.6%	--
Educational Attainment			
High school or less	23.1%	19.5%	--
Some college	65.1%	65.7%	--
Bachelor's degree	9.5%	11.1%	--
Master's degree or more	2.3%	3.7%	--
Employment			
Annual earning (mean)*	$28,500	$30,781	$31,910
Usual hours worked per week (mean)	39.6	38.1	--
Full-time workers**	86.0%	85.2%	--

* ACS 2014 earnings were adjusted to 2015 real dollar values based on the Consumer Price Index. ACS and CPS wage and salary earnings include reported income from all sources. OES wage earnings are annualized to represent a full-time average wage.

**Full-time indicates 32 or more weekly work hours.

Data sources: American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

SUGGESTED CITATION

Skillman SM, Dahal A, Frogner BK, Stubbs BA. *National Supply Estimates of Specific Allied Health Occupations Using Different Data Sources: Data Snapshot – Medical Assistants*. Center for Health Workforce Studies, University of Washington, Dec 2016.