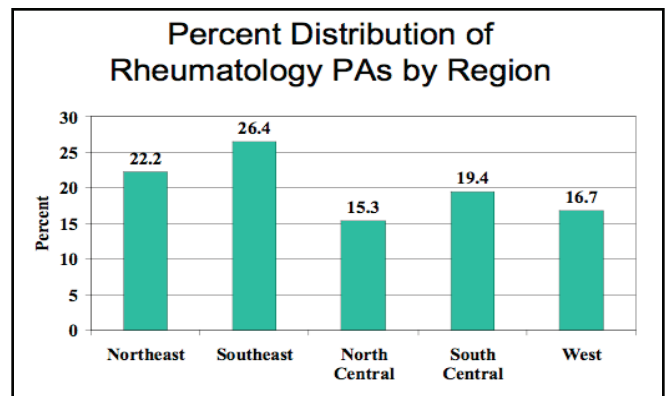


# PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT: RHEUMATOLOGY

A role delineation of PAs in the U.S. finds them working closely with rheumatologists and often providing similar care. The question of how efficient they are in these roles provides opportunities for further research. Understanding the various components of the health workforce is paramount in making estimates of future care needs.

Summary Measures of Total Annual Income from Primary Employer for Respondents Who Work at Least 32 Hours per Week at Primary Clinical Job*		
	Rheumatology PAs	All Other PAs
<b>Respondents</b>	46	1,381
<b>Mean</b>	\$82,048	\$88,738
<b>Standard deviation</b>	\$18,922	\$18,807
<b>10th percentile</b>	\$67,500	\$72,500
<b>25th percentile</b>	\$72,500	\$77,500
<b>Median</b>	\$82,500	\$87,500
<b>75th percentile</b>	\$92,500	\$97,500
<b>90th percentile</b>	\$102,500	\$107,500
<i>*Excludes self-employed PAs</i>		

Overall salaries for rheumatology PAs have increased, by 3% annually, on average, since 2002.



Rheumatology PAs are somewhat evenly distributed across all five regions of the US.

The development and deployment of physician assistants (PAs) began in the late 1960s. The original intent was to extend the role of the busy general/family practitioner in providing greater patient access and offloading some of the workload in primary care. Within a few years, PAs were utilized not only in primary care but also within medical and surgical subspecialties. Rheumatology is one such discipline where PAs have been employed since the early 1970s. A survey by the American College of Rheumatology in 2003 found that more than one fifth of the respondents employed a PA or NP in their practice.

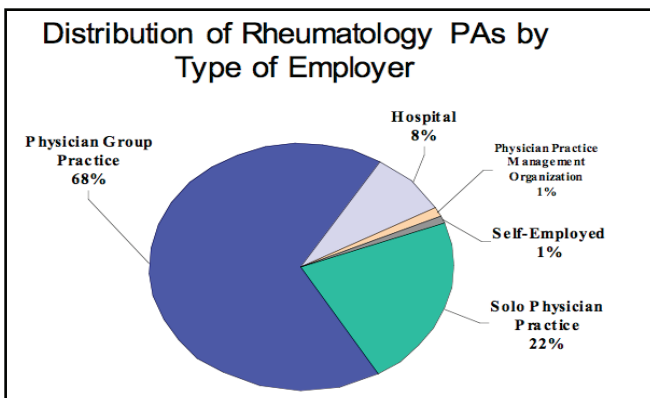


Age of Rheumatology and IM Specialty PAs: 2010		
	Rheumatology	All Others
Count	52	1,574
Mean	40.4	39.7
Standard deviation	12.53	10.67
10th percentile	26.0	28.0
25th percentile	28.0	31.0
Median	38.5	37.0
75th percentile	51.0	48.0
90th percentile	57.0	56.0

The mean age of rheumatology PAs is 40.4 years; the mean age for all other respondents is 39.7 years. The median ages are 38.5 for rheumatology PAs and 37 for all other respondents

Number and Percent Distribution of Clinically Practicing Respondents by Number of Concurrent PA Jobs: 2010				
	Rheumatology		Other Specialties	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Respondents	51	100.0%	1,564	100.0%
One	45	88.2	1,366	87.4%
Two	4	7.8%	170	10.8%
Three	2	3.9%	24	1.6%
More than three	0	0	4	.2%
Self-employed with multiple contracts	1	2%	2	.1%

When asked about concurrent PA jobs, 45 of 51 rheumatology PA respondents (88.2%) claimed one job while four (7.8%) claimed two jobs and two (3.9%) claimed three jobs.



The percent of rheumatology PAs working with a solo practitioner physician is 27%, according to the census. Two-thirds (67%) work in a group practice, which may be single specialty or multispecialty



In 2007 a rheumatology PA role delineation study was undertaken. In all, 58 individuals were interviewed; 76% were women and 71% were employed full-time (32 hours per week). Most (88%) were employed in solo practices, partnerships, or group practices, and some in medical school/university. The rheumatology PAs reported spending 80–100% of their time caring for patients. Most provide initial consultation for new patients. Three quarters of practices randomly assigned patients to PAs. Few of the respondents experienced any reimbursement insurance difficulty. Almost all initiated disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), biologicals, and anti-osteoporotics, as well as performing joint injections with corticosteroids and viscosupplements. Over half of the PAs participated in research such as clinical trials/drug studies conducting joint assessment, pain management, and adverse reactions to new biological treatments. The results from this study suggest that PAs employed in rheumatology practices function at a high level of activity. They seem to have comfortably assumed the skills transferred from their supervising doctor. Furthermore, they are evaluating patients, initiating treatment and performing certain procedures (prescribing and injecting joints). Finally, rheumatology PAs appear to find this career satisfying (Hooker RS, Rangan BV. Role delineation of rheumatology physician assistants. *Journal Clinical Rheumatology*. 2008; 14(4): 202-205).

*This flyer contains information regarding the characteristics of PAs who identified rheumatology as their specialty and who also completed the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) annual census for the year 2010. It is an analysis of an AAPA dataset that was delivered to the Society of Physician Assistants in Rheumatology (SPAR) leadership in the fall of 2010 and was created using the AAPA annual census and a parsed version of the census on rheumatology PAs. The interpretations are those of the author and do not reflect the policies or views of either the AAPA or SPAR.*