**INTRODUCTION**

Research suggests some individuals in the medical and health professions engage in various acts of academic dishonesty during their training. While the exact prevalence of cheating in U.S. medical schools is unknown, research has identified rates of academic dishonesty ranging from 0% to 58.2%.\(^1,2,3\) Little research on physician assistant (PA) students’ attitudes toward academic dishonesty has been conducted and the national prevalence of cheating in PA schools has not been established.

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**RESULTS**

❖ A total of 493 self-selected clinical-year PA students responded to the survey.
❖ The majority of respondents were female (79.6%).
❖ Only 3% of clinical-year PA students self-reported cheating during PA school.
❖ Males self-reported significantly higher rates of cheating across all education levels.
❖ The strongest predictor of cheating in PA school was a history of cheating as an undergraduate.
❖ The most common cheating behavior that clinical-year PA students reported observing or hearing about in PA school was receiving information about an exam prior to its administration (70.9%).
❖ Females were significantly more likely than males to disagree with the statements that everyone cheats in PA school at some point (\(U = 15599.50, z = -2.75, p = .012\)) and cheating in PA school does not hurt anyone in the long run (\(U = 15933.00, z = -2.15, p = .032\)).
❖ The majority of respondents (\(n = 262, 53.4\%\)) reported that a person who cheated on exams in PA school is likely to be less trustworthy as a PA.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study found that cheating exists in PA education at a low self-reported rate, PA students’ attitudes and perceptions of cheating behaviors varies, and a history of cheating as an undergraduate was a strong predictor for cheating in PA school. Future research is needed to validate the prevalence of academic dishonesty in PA education, identify didactic and clinical settings that may trigger such behavior, and develop educational solutions to eliminate academic dishonesty from PA education.

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**PA STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD CHEATING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudinal Statement</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone cheats in PA school at one time or another.</td>
<td>402 (81.5)</td>
<td>28 (5.7)</td>
<td>63 (12.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would cheat in PA school if I was certain I would not get caught.</td>
<td>443 (89.9)</td>
<td>26 (5.3)</td>
<td>24 (4.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the long run, cheating in PA school does not hurt anyone.</td>
<td>452 (91.9)</td>
<td>20 (4.1)</td>
<td>20 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheaters in PA school just end up hurting themselves in the long run.</td>
<td>57 (11.6)</td>
<td>20 (4.1)</td>
<td>414 (84.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**REFERENCES**