

A career in healthcare for students in a graduate level Clinical Exercise Physiology Program

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ABSTRACT

Physician referrals to physical therapy are common in mainstream healthcare practice. Clinical Exercise Physiologists (CEPs) are mostly limited to employment as a practitioner in supervised cardiac rehabilitation (CR) or cardiology-based diagnostics and stress testing. **PURPOSE:** This investigation was conducted to identify employment trends in healthcare for a cohort of CEPs prior to or within 1-year after graduation from an accredited CEP Program (2017-2022). **METHODS:** A 5-year retrospective review of university and internship site historical records was conducted to determine the career path of the CEPs. This investigation included a sample of 10 students (50% female) that successfully completed a cardiology-based internship/research trainee appointment at large integrated healthcare system in Arizona and/or were hired by that institution. **RESULTS:** An analysis of career landmarks included completion of (1) a clinical site CR internship/research trainee appointment (100%), (2) part-time CR program employment prior to graduation (60%) or at graduation (10%), (3) full-time (FT) CR program employment at graduation (70%), (4) FT employment in cardiology-based diagnostics or stress testing at graduation (10%), (5) further education (FE) only at graduation (10%), (6) FE combined with FT CR employment at graduation (10%), (7) FT employment in another field > 1 year after FT CR employment (10% academia; 10% medical sales). **CONCLUSION:** The findings of this preliminary observation in this small cohort of graduate level CEPs identified that the majority was hired as a FT CEP in a healthcare institution at graduation or enrolled in further graduate school education.