

# Confidence and Perceived Role of Physical Therapists in Treating Patients Who are Presenting Pre- and Postpartum in the Outpatient Setting: A Survey Study

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## Purpose and Hypothesis

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to evaluate the confidence and perceived role of physical therapists (PTs) in treating patients who are presenting pre- and postpartum by using a series of questions within the survey.

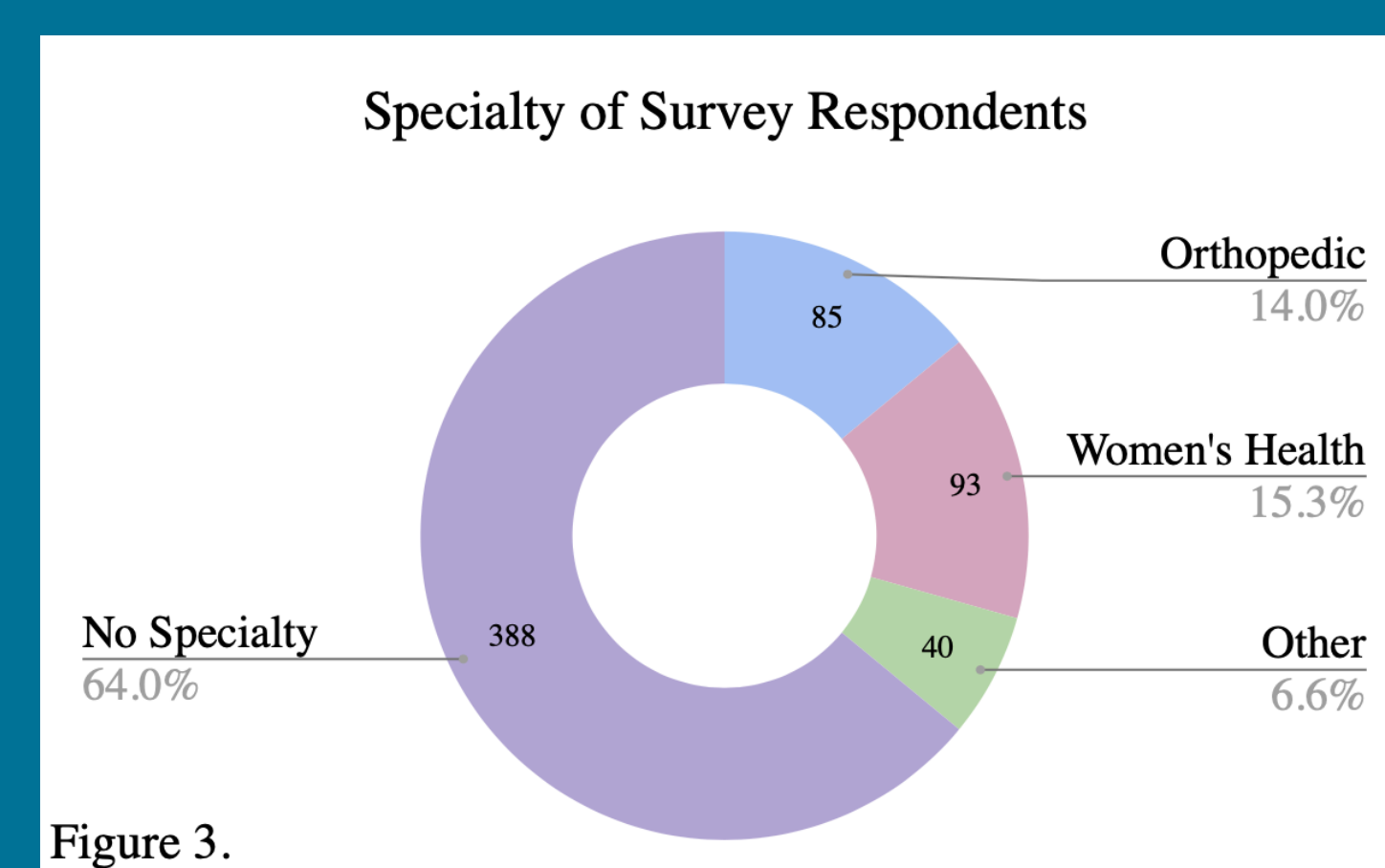
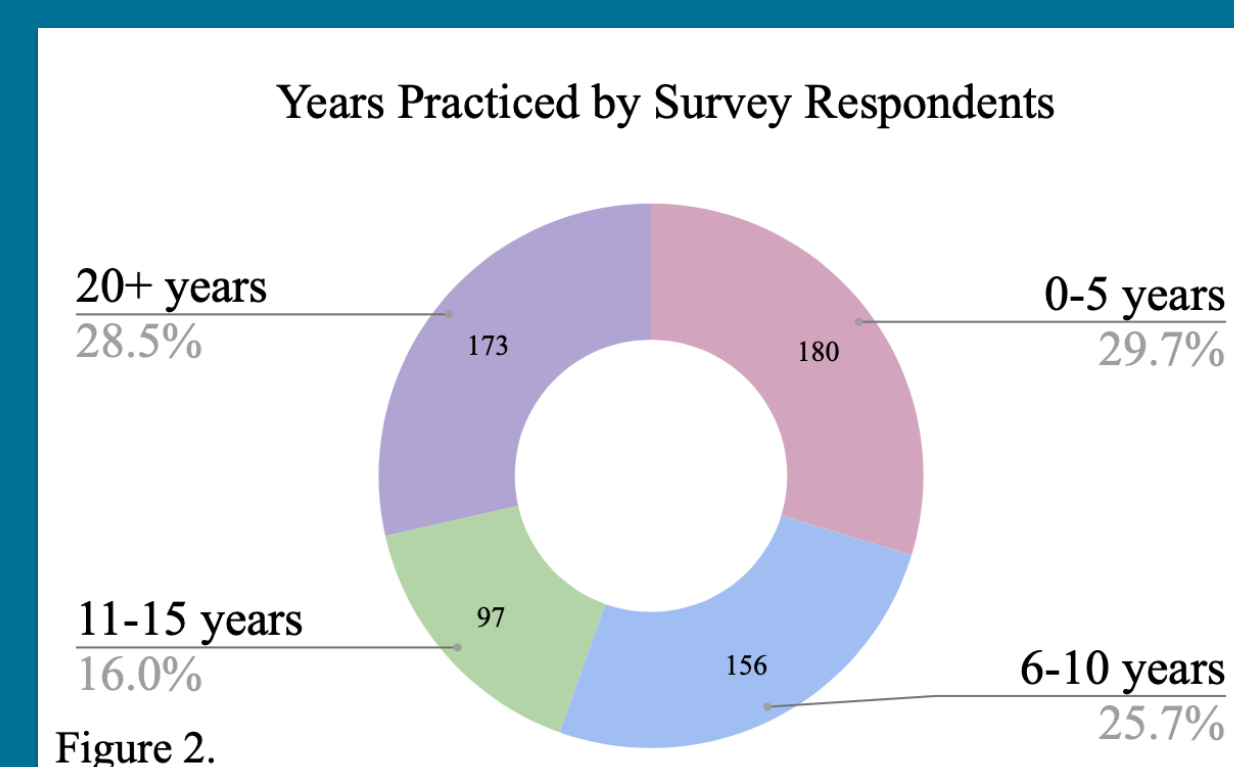
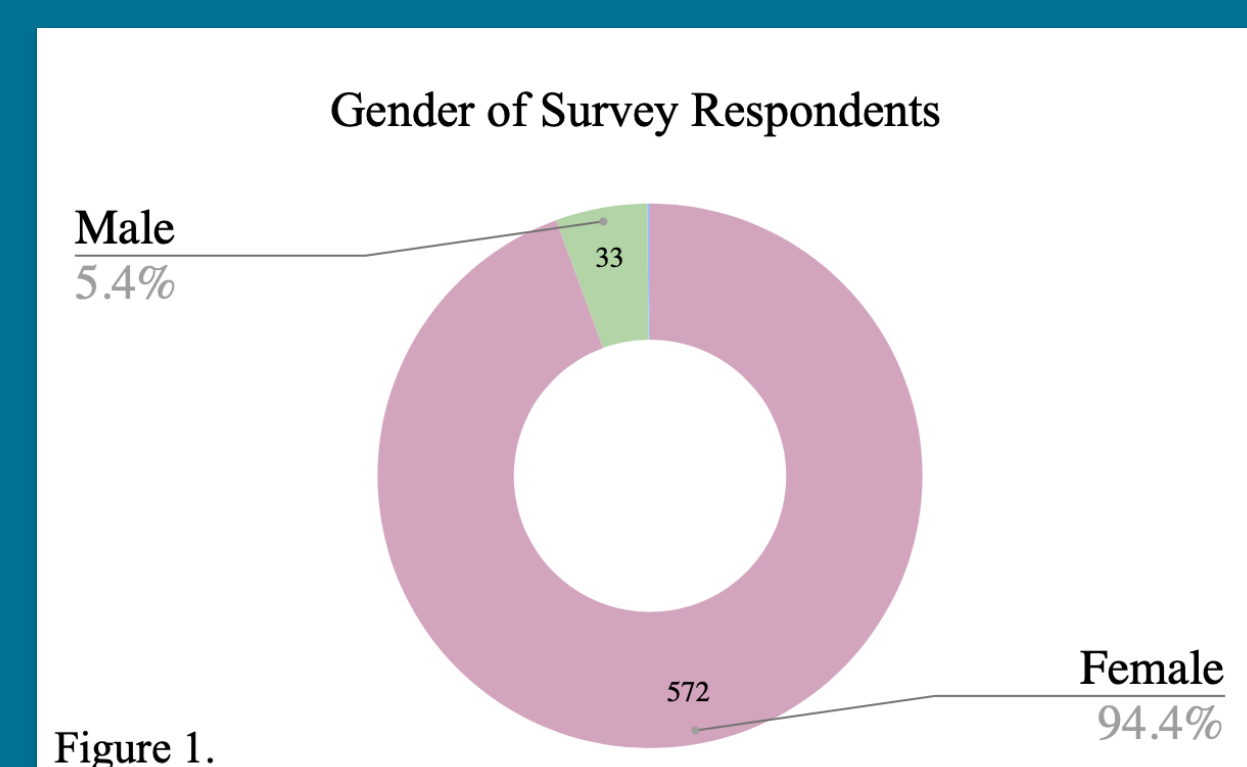
**Hypotheses:**

1. Women's Health Specialists will have greater levels of confidence compared to other specialties when treating patients who suffer from pregnancy specific diagnoses.
2. Sports Certified Specialists will have greater levels of confidence compared to other specialties in prescribing a postpartum return-to-sport program.
3. Outpatient physical therapists with a specialty certification will report their own specialty as being the most qualified of treating the diagnoses listed in the survey in patients who are presenting pre- and postpartum.

## Methods

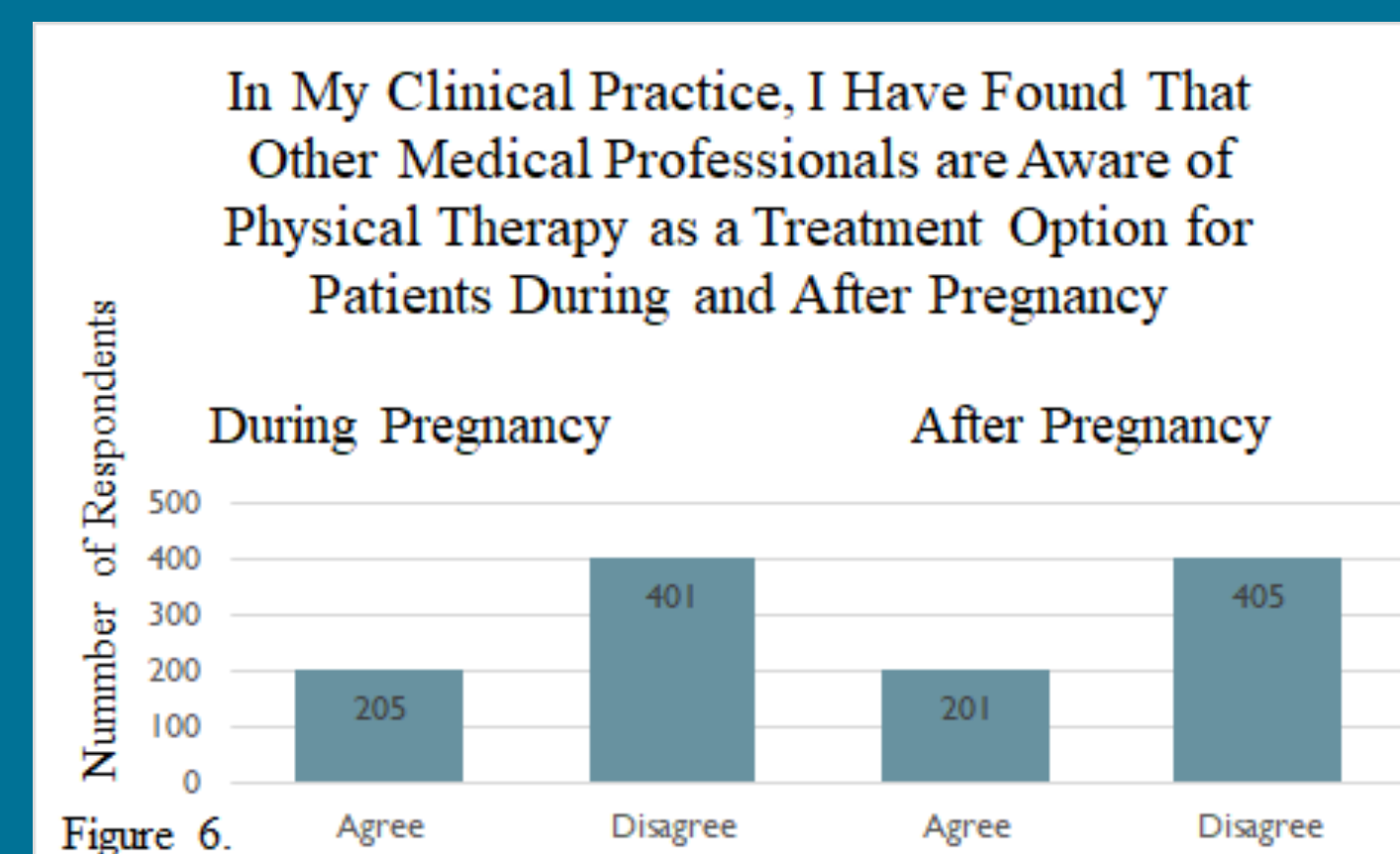
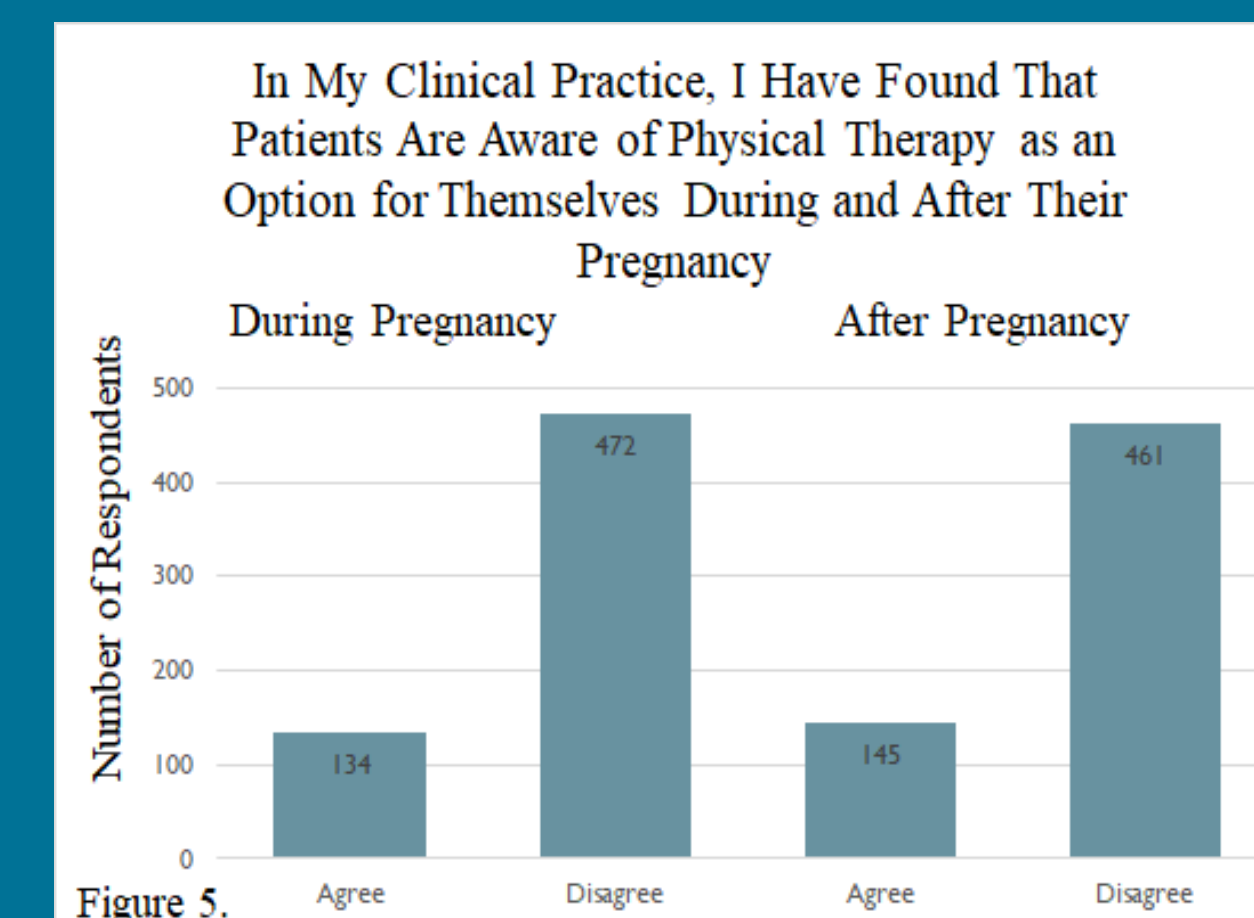
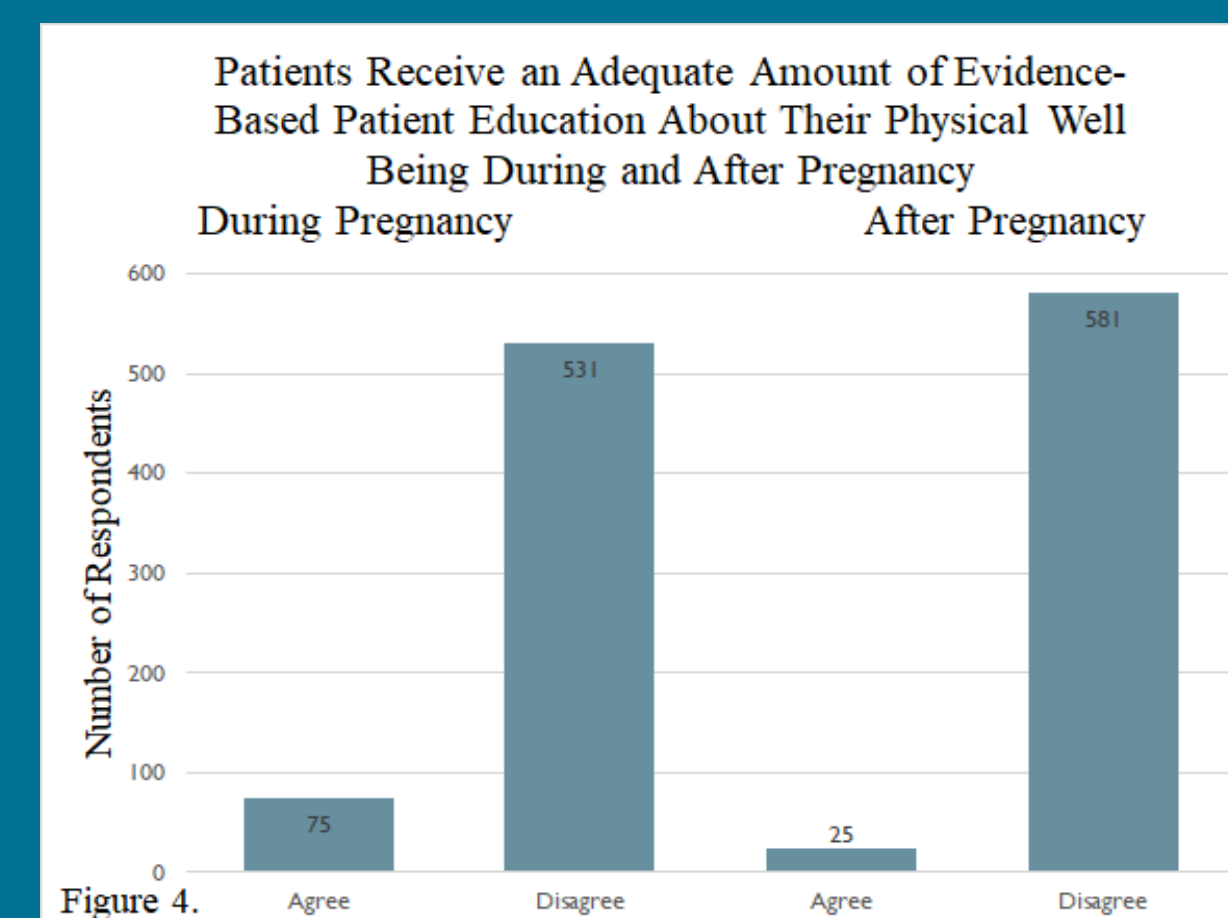
1. Outpatient PTs were recruited to complete a 42-item survey housed on Qualtrics.
2. Participants completed items regarding their demographic profile, area of specialty, level of confidence in treating select pathologies and were asked to rank the appropriate specialty to treat pathologies and sport specific tasks commonly seen in patients who are pre- and postpartum.
3. Descriptive statistics were generated to evaluate demographics, confidence level, and first rank specialties.
4. Kruskal-Wallis statistical analysis was used to evaluate if there was a difference in confidence levels between specialties when treating patients at each trimester, two months, and six months postpartum.
5. Chi-Square (One Square) test was used to evaluate if PTs believe their specialty is most qualified to treat various conditions in patients who are pre- and postpartum.

## Demographics



## Results

- We received a completion rate of 81% (N = 606).
- A statistically significant difference was found in confidence levels between specialty groups.
- Participants across all specialty groups believed that patients do not receive adequate evidence based education during pregnancy (87%) and after pregnancy (96%) (Figure 4).



- Women's health specialists were ranked as the **most qualified** to treat all conditions in patients both pre- and postpartum, except for wrist/hand pain (Table 1) and foot/ankle pain.
  - Chi-Square determined the ranking did **not** occur due to chance alone.

Table 1. PT Specialty Ranked Most Qualified to Treat a Patient with Wrist/Hand Pain or Dysfunction in a Patient Who is Pregnant (Survey Question 14)

Specialty	Ranked #1	%
Any Specialty	188	31.02
Clinical Specialist in Orthopedics	278	45.87
Clinical Specialist in Sports	2	0.33
Clinical Specialist in Women's Health	138	22.77
Ranked #1 as same specialty	237	

Table 2. PT Specialty Ranked Most Qualified to Treat a Patient Who Would Like to Continue Competitive or Recreational Running (Survey Question #23)

Specialty	Ranked #1	%
Any Specialty	28	4.62
Clinical Specialist in Orthopedics	21	3.47
Clinical Specialist in Sports	74	12.21
Clinical Specialist in Women's Health	483	79.7
Ranked #1 as same specialty	170	

## Conclusions

- PTs with a Women's Health Specialist board certification were perceived to be most qualified to treat a variety of conditions in patients presenting both pre- and postpartum.
- The majority of PTs believed that patients are unaware of physical therapy as a treatment option during and after pregnancy.
  - Suggests a need for patient and interprofessional healthcare professional education on the benefits of pre- and postpartum physical therapy.
- The majority of PTs believed that patients do not receive adequate evidence-based patient education.

## Clinical Relevance

- Majority of participants ranked **Women's Health Specialists** as the **most qualified** clinician to treat a variety of conditions in both pre- and postpartum patients
  - Indicates a need to provide knowledge and education to PTs on how to safely and effectively treat patients presenting pre- and postpartum with a variety of health conditions to improve the confidence of all PTs, regardless of specialty, in treating this population

Suggestions for future research

- Open ended questions were included in the survey. Future research could include qualitative data analysis of these questions to gain a deeper insight of the participants' perspectives about:
  - What impacts physical therapy care for this patient population
  - How physical therapists can improve treating this patient population
- Patient perspective surveys
  - Patient perspectives about physical activity during and after pregnancy
  - Experience with physical therapy
    - Do other healthcare professionals present physical therapy as an option to patients?
    - Is physical therapy a known option to patients during and after pregnancy?

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