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Transportation as a Barrier to Healthcare Access for Seniors of Low Socioeconomic Status

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Background

By 2030, approximately 20 percent of the population will be ≥ 65 years of age (US Census Bureau, 2009). There is increased risk of developing disabling conditions as well as declining motor, sensory and cognitive abilities impacting the individual (Dahan-Oliel et al., 2010). These conditions can impact the individual's ability to transport themselves independently and their access to transportation services (Dahan Oliel et al., 2010).

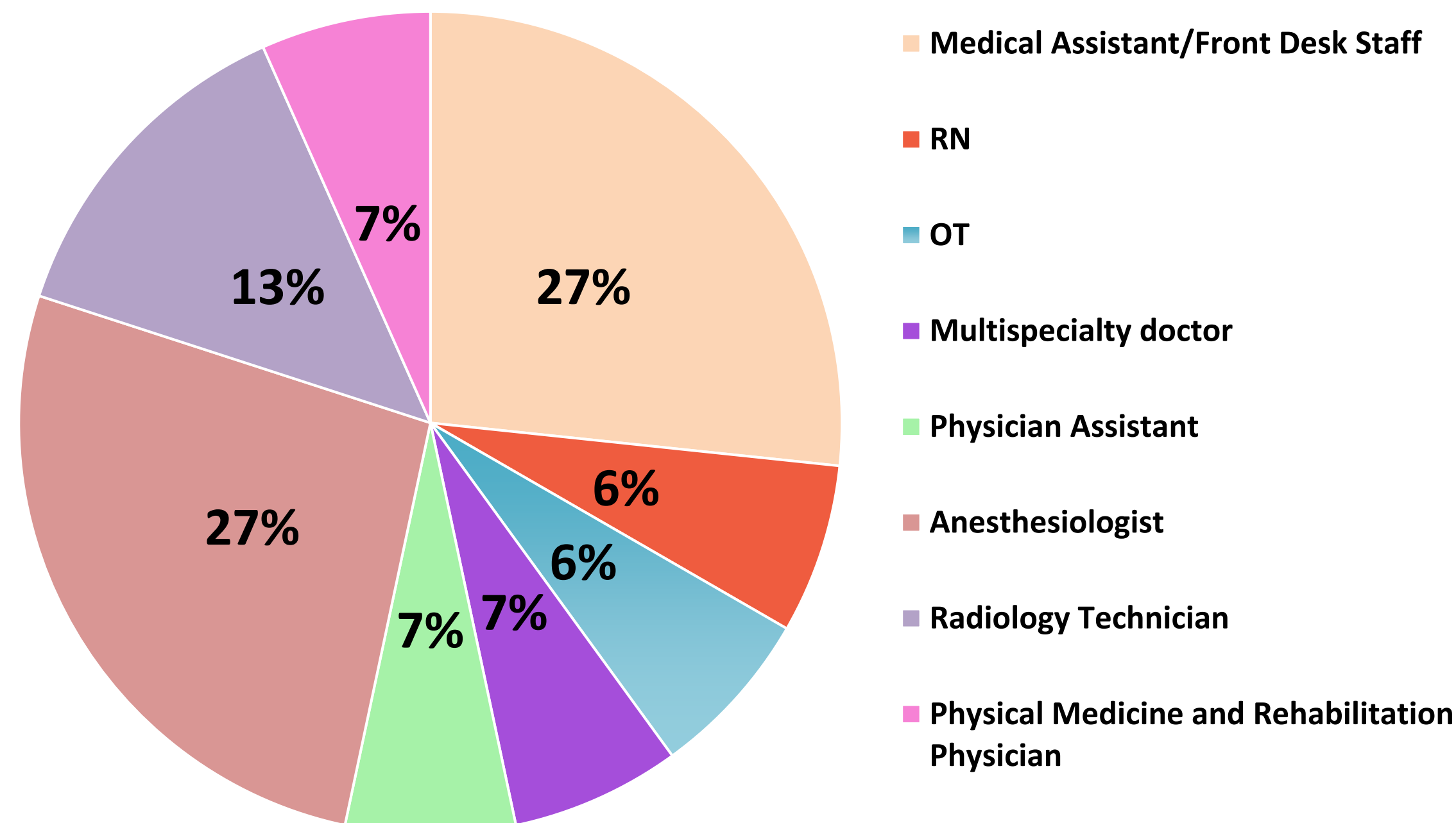
Socioeconomic constraints and a lack of viable transportation can inhibit an individual's ability to travel to doctor's offices and appointments (Wolf et al., 2020). Barriers to transportation can cause an interruption to adherence of medical appointments which can keep individuals from receiving or even beginning care (Wolf et al., 2020). In 2005, it was estimated that in the United States 3.5 million individuals delayed or didn't attend nonemergency treatment due to lack of transportation to the facility (Wallace et al., 2005).

Purpose

- Gather information on what the barriers are for older adults who live in low-income communities in accessing transportation services.
- Identify what is needed to increase their access to transportation services in order to continue to support their wellbeing and their access to health care services.

Results

Practitioners in Study



Referral Process: Seniors are referred to other healthcare professionals (social work) not always specific to transportation.

Communication Fears: Seniors were from outside the USA with lower education and fear retaliation.

Transportation Preference: It is often assumed that senior have friends or family who can provide transportation.

Technology Challenges: Seniors are often referred to cellphone applications or the internet, neither of which are accessible to them.

Disconnect

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Discussion

- Seniors can identify what they want help with regarding transportation. However, they are having difficulty with receiving access to the information
- Healthcare professionals and seniors have differing views on what the barriers are to accessing transportation.
- The literature review and findings contrasted in that literature focused on cost and environmental barriers.

Implications

- Occupational therapists have the opportunity to assume a consultative role.
- Occupational therapists working with those in Home Health and inpatient facilities preparing for discharge can begin working on transportation as an occupation.

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