

# WORK, CONTINUING EDUCATION AND INCOME PROFESSIONAL AUDIOLOGIST ACTIVE IN AUDIOLOGY

## *Trabalho, educação continuada e renda do profissional fonoaudiólogo atuante em Audiologia*

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to investigate the formation pattern and performance of the audiologist in Audiology in the 6th Region, besides analyzing job satisfaction, and to verify the relationship between the degree of professional development and the degree of satisfaction with the speech therapist monthly income – salary. **Methods:** cross-sectional study with audiologists enrolled in the 6th Region Regional Speech Council, through the application of a questionnaire to analyze the variables: education, professional activity areas, salary and satisfaction with the profession, in the period of May to October 2012. **Results:** 857 audiologists were investigated. Of these, 63.8% work in Audiology, 53.7% graduated in Minas Gerais, 51.4% have specialization and 5.5% are masters, which was associated statistically with higher wage income ( $p < 0.05$ ). With regard to the source of income, 84.1% reported having in Speech Therapy your only source of income and most receive from 2 to 5 minimum wages. Most work with occupational audiology. The ENT is the professional who most directs patients. From those investigated, 54.1% are not satisfied with their profession. There was a significant relationship between job satisfaction and income. **Conclusion:** there was little integration of the speech therapist in the areas of expertise, central auditory processing test, vestibular rehabilitation, hearing conservation program and labyrinthine tests. The importance of continuing studies is emphasized to assist in employability on the labor market and improve professional skills. It is evident the need to integrate academic and professional training.

**KEYWORDS:** Audiology; Professional Practice Location; Job Market; Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences; Professional Training

### ■ INTRODUCTION

The Unique System of Health (USH) (Sistema Único de Saúde – SUS) constituted in 1988 has as priorities universality, integrity and equality in the actions of Brazilian's health. Since its creation, many advances are observed, specially in auditory, incorporated as public health politics in Brazil in 1993, with the introduction of cochlear implant in the Unique System of Health (USH)<sup>1</sup>. The creation

and introduction, in October 2004, of rule GM nº 2073 creating the National Politics of Attention to The Auditory Health, allowed a decisive step in the organization of a comprehensive caring range to the people, pointing out the importance of the universality of access, equality, integrity and humanization at the auditory public health<sup>2</sup>. In 2010, was approved the Law of Neonatal Universal Auditory Triage, that brought a new dimension to the precocious diagnosis of deficiency auditory<sup>3,4</sup>.

The national politics of health have been favouring the introduction of the professional speech therapist at USH, mainly at the basic attention, with large growing of the health attention network professionals number in the last years<sup>5,6</sup>. This introduction was affirmed and ensured by the creation of Family

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Health Support Nuclei (FHSN)<sup>7</sup> and other programs of health, although it's still observed the necessity of expansion of speech therapy assistance actions<sup>8</sup>. Currently, the speech therapists act with actions in family's health strategies<sup>9</sup>, child's health, mental's health, school's health and teenager's health and they are essential in the actions embraced by the National Auditory Health Politics<sup>10,11</sup>, because it's speech therapist's task the realization of evaluation, diagnoses, treatment, rehabilitation and auditory triage<sup>12</sup>.

The shortage of studies related to the pattern of the speech therapist who acts in the Audiology's area contributes to the importance of this research, as long as allows the characterization of these professionals and a diagnoses of the market situation, favoring the discover of potential areas, a higher compromising with the class and the profession value.

This way, the current study had as purpose to investigate the pattern of vocational training and speech therapist's performance in the Audiology area at 6<sup>th</sup> region (Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul), besides analyzing the professional satisfaction and verifying possible relations between the degree of professional improvement and satisfaction of the speech therapist with the monthly income provided by his/her salary.

## ■ METHODS

The research was approved by the Committee of Ethics in Research of Faculdade de Estudos Administrativos de Minas Gerais (FEAD MG) under the protocol 202. Everyone who was investigated signed the Free Consent Term and Clarified authorizing his/her participation in the research.

It was realized a descriptive transversal study from April to October 2012, with speech therapists registered at Regional Council of Speech Therapy (CST) (Conselho Regional de Fonoaudiologia - CRFa) of the 6<sup>th</sup> region, with a questionnaire application.

The study was an initiative of CRFa 6<sup>th</sup> region in partnerships with the Universities and Colleges with graduation in speech therapy from Belo Horizonte, that authorized/allowed the data analysis in this research.

The professionals received the questionnaire and the free consent term and clarified by mail; e-mail; mailing from Speech Therapists Trade Union from Minas Gerais (SINFEMG – Sindicato dos Fonoaudiólogos de Minas Gerais) and propaganda at site, where the same was available to download with the instructions to participate. It was

used a questionnaire consisting of 27 questions with opened and closed options to answer, made by speech therapists from CRFa 6<sup>th</sup> Region, SINFEMG and students and professors from Speech Therapy Courses at Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC Minas), FEAD MG and Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG).

The questions investigate data related to the level of training, professional practice location, monthly income/salary and satisfaction with the career.

The data bank of the research was available to realize to realize this present research, that considered as initial criteria being a speech therapist registered at 6<sup>th</sup> Region and has performing in the Audiology area (positive answer to the the question 16 A from the questionnaire). The questionnaires with mistakes and incoherencies at fulfillment were excluded.

To the portal, processing and quantitative analysis of the data was used software SPSS-16.0 version. To the descriptive analysis, was made a distribution of frequency of categorical variables of diffusion of diffusion of continuous variables involved in the performing characterization and professional pattern of speech therapist inserted at 6<sup>th</sup> Region. It was used the test Qui-quadrado to verify the differences between the ratios, with significance level of  $p < 0,05$ .

## ■ RESULTS

The study of CRFa 6<sup>th</sup> Region investigated 857 speech therapists from different areas of performing. In this present research, were selected only the professionals that perform in the Audiology area, corresponding to 547 (63,8%) speech therapists. From these, 523 (95,6%) are female gender; 20 (3,7%) are male gender; and 4 (0,7%) didn't pronounce the gender. The middle of ages was 32,2 years old ( $\pm 6,4$  years), between 21 to 58 years old.

From professionals the perform in the Audiology area, 294 (53,7%) graduated in the Minas Gerais State; 59 (10,8%), in Espírito Santo; 25 (4,6%), in Mato Grosso do Sul; 10 (1,8%), in Mato Grosso and 156 (28,5%) in States that are not in 6<sup>th</sup> Region. From people that graduated in Minas Gerais State, the majority (58,2%) concluded the graduation in Belo Horizonte municipality. From professionals the graduated in Espírito Santo, 52 (88,1%) graduated in Vila Velha. Among the graduating students in Mato Grosso do Sul State everyone (100%) concluded the course at the capital – Campo Grande. From professionals graduated in Mato Grosso State, 5 (50%) accomplished the course in Cuiabá and 5 (50%) in Várzea Grande Municipality.

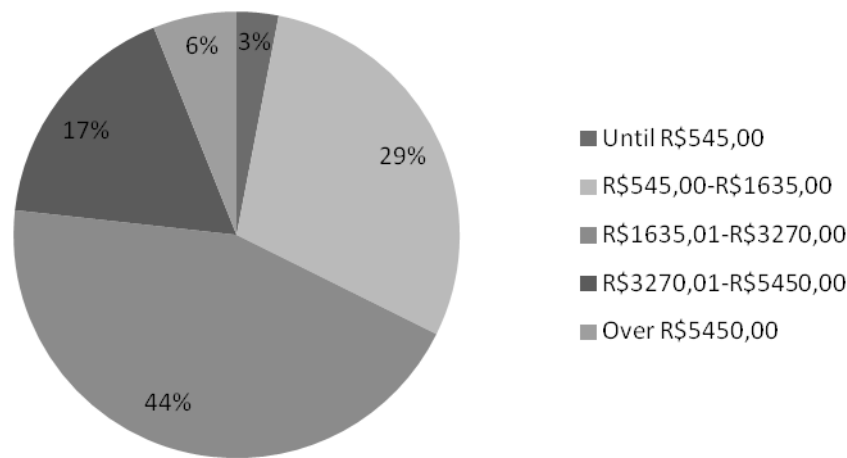
From everyone that was investigated, 281 (51,4%) have specialization, being 119 (42,3%) with specialization only in Audiology and 24 (8,5%) are specialized in one more area, being Audiology one of them. The rest of others, 49,1%, has specialization in other areas of Speech Therapy or from Health.

From professionals that perform with Audiology, 30 (5,5%) have master and 1 (0,2%) has doctorate.

From the amount of 547 professionals, 460 (84,1%) related the Speech Therapy is their only

income, 52 (9,5%) has in the Speech Therapy as the most important income, but it is not the only one and 32 (5,9%) related having another incomes.

About the monthly income, the major part of the people who was investigated receive R\$ 1.635,01 to R\$ 3.270,00 (Figure 1), that stands for two to five minimum wage of present study's year. Among professionals that have income superior to R\$ 5.450,00, 30 (86%) related having specialization (Table 1).



**Figure 1 – Monthly salary income of speech therapists from 6th region that perform in Audiology area**

**Table 1 – Relationship between the professional pattern and the monthly income of the speech therapists that perform in Audiology area at 6<sup>th</sup> Region**

Continuing Education		Monthly income					Test	P value
		Until R\$545,00	R\$545,01-R\$1635,00	R\$1635,01-R\$3270,00	R\$3270,01-R\$5450,00	Over R\$5450,00		
Specialization	Yes	6 (40%)	77 (49%)	155 (65%)	76 (82%)	30 (86%)	39,3	0,00*
	No	9 (60%)	81 (50%)	85 (35%)	17 (18%)	5 (14%)		
Master	Yes	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	12 (5%)	9 (10%)	2 (6%)	11,1	0,51
	No	15 (100%)	155 (98%)	227 (94%)	84 (90%)	33 (94%)		

\*Values statistically meaningful ( $p < 0,05$ ) – Qui-Quadrado Test

About the performing areas, 52% of professionals work accomplishing occupational audiological exams (Figure 2).

About the performing areas and the distribution in the states that reach 6<sup>th</sup> Region, it's noticed that major number of speech therapists is working in Minas Gerais. Mato Grosso do Sul State

represents the smallest percentage of performing. The expertise areas, central auditory processing test, vestibular rehabilitation, hearing conservation program and labyrinthine tests (except for Espírito Santo) represent potential performing in these states (Table 2).

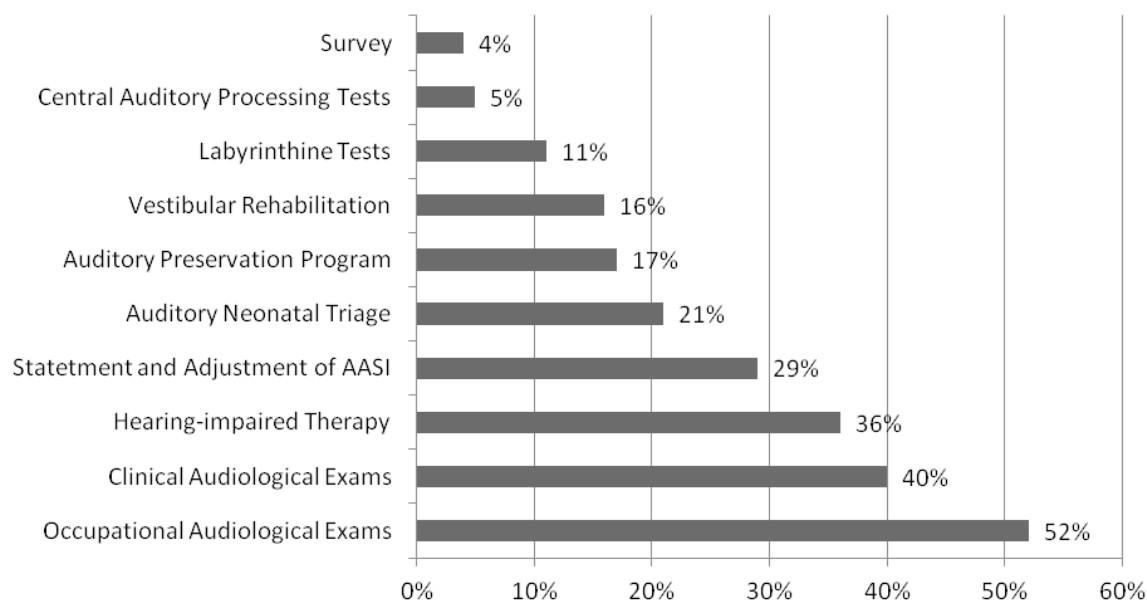


Figure 2 – Speech Therapists´ performing from 6th Region in the Audiology area

Table 2 – Relationship between performing areas and the distribution per states of active speech therapists in the audiology area at 6th region

Performing areas		States				
		Minas Gerais (N=394)	Espírito Santo (N=78)	Mato Grosso (N=35)	Mato Grosso do Sul (N=32)	Out of 6th Region (N=5)
Clinical audiological exam	Yes	153 - 38,8%	29 - 37,1%	15 - 42,8%	14 - 43,7%	3 - 60%
	No	241 - 61,1%	49 - 62,8%	20 - 57,1%	18 - 56,2%	2 - 40%
Occupational audiological exam	Yes	199 - 50,5%	46 - 58,9%	16 - 45,7%	20 - 62,5%	2 - 40%
	No	195 - 49,4%	32 - 41%	19 - 54,2%	12 - 37,5%	3 - 60%
Labyrinthine tests	Yes	39 - 9,8%	10 - 12,8%	6 - 17,1%	2 - 6,2%	1 - 20%
	No	354 - 89,8%	68 - 87,1%	29 - 82,8%	30 - 93,7%	4 - 80%
Vestibular rehabilitation	Yes	68 - 17,2%	8 - 10,2%	7 - 20%	3 - 9,3%	2 - 40%
	No	326 - 82,7%	70 - 89,7%	28 - 80%	29 - 90,6%	3 - 60%
Universal auditory neonatal triage	Yes	77 - 19,5%	17 - 21,7%	10 - 28,5%	7 - 21,8%	2 - 40%
	No	317 - 80,4%	61 - 78,2%	25 - 71,4%	25 - 78,1%	3 - 60%
Hearing-impaired Therapy	Yes	145 - 36,8%	26 - 33,3%	11 - 31,4%	13 - 40,6%	3 - 60%
	No	249 - 63,1%	52 - 66,6%	24 - 68,5%	19 - 59,3%	2 - 40%
Statement and adjustment of AASI	Yes	134 - 34%	9 - 11,5%	9 - 25,7%	7 - 21,8%	2 - 40%
	No	260 - 65,9%	69 - 88,4%	26 - 74,2%	25 - 78,1%	3 - 60%
Processing central auditory test	Yes	23 - 5,8%	2 - 2,5%	1 - 2,8%	1 - 3,1%	2 - 40%
	No	371 - 94,1%	76 - 97,4%	34 - 97,1%	31 - 96,8%	3 - 60%
Auditory preservation program	Yes	69 - 17,5%	8 - 10,2%	6 - 17,1%	6 - 18,7%	0 - 0%
	No	325 - 82,4%	70 - 89,7%	29 - 82,8%	26 - 81,2%	5 - 100%
Survey	Yes	14 - 3,5%	3 - 3,8%	2 - 5,7%	1 - 3,1%	0 - 0%
	No	380 - 96,4%	75 - 96,1%	33 - 94,2%	31 - 96,8%	5 - 100%
Others	Yes	17 - 4,3%	4 - 5,1%	2 - 5,7%	1 - 3,1%	0 - 0%
	No	377 - 95,6%	74 - 94,8%	33 - 94,2%	31 - 96,8%	5 - 100%

Among the speech therapists that perform with Audiology, 489 (89,4%) receive patients from others professionals, being the otorhinolaryngologist 419 (76,6%) the professional that does more routings, followed by pediatrician 321 (58,7%), orthodontist 277 (50,6%), school 271 (49,5%), neurologist 268 (49%), psychologist 254 (46,4%), speech therapist 230 (42%), labor doctor 210 (38,4%), physiotherapist 210 (38,4%), general practitioner 200 (36,6%), psychopedagogue 183 (33,5%), odontopediatrician 135 (24,7%), geriatrician 144 (20,8%), occupational therapist 101 (18,5%), surgeon of head and neck 88 (16,1%), nutritionist 79 (14,4%), jaw facial surgeon 75(13,7%), neo pediatrician 72 (13,2%), oncologist

52 (9,5%), another professionals 27 (4.9%), allergologist 17 (3,1%), dermatologist 9 (1,6%) and beauty surgeon 7 (1,3%).

From who was investigated, 248 (45,4%) are satisfied with their profession and 296 (54,1%) are not satisfied. From these, 189 (34,6%) are not satisfied because of bad income, 56 (10,2%) because of lack of job, 29 (5,3%) because people do not recognize their work and 22 (4%) did not justify the reason.

From speech therapists that receive the salary over R\$5400,00, 29 (85%) are satisfied as professionals (Table 3).

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**Table 3 – Relationship between professional satisfaction and monthly salary income of performing speech therapists in the audiology area at 6<sup>th</sup> region**

Professional satisfaction	Monthly salary income					Test	p value
	Until R\$545,00	R\$545,01- R\$1635,00	R\$1635,01- R\$3270,00	R\$3270,01- R\$5450,00	Over R\$5450,00		
Yes	4 (29%)	39 (26%)	110 (47%)	53 (58%)	29 (85%)	53,6	0,00*
No	10 (71%)	113 (74%)	125 (53%)	38 (42%)	5 (15%)		

\*Values statistically meaningful ( $p < 0,05$ ) – Qui-Quadrado Test

## ■ DISCUSSION

By the analysis of database of the research about the professional pattern of Speech Therapy Regional Council 6<sup>th</sup> Region (Conselho Regional de Fonoaudiologia da 6<sup>a</sup> Região), it was tried to typify the speech therapy professional that performs at the Audiology area. From who was investigated, the major referred working with evaluation, diagnosis or hearing rehabilitation or vestibular. This datum goes to the reality of job market where the first option of speech therapist's job is Audiology, with spotlight to audiology's area that absorbs a big amount that has just graduated, professionals are going to be out for their first job and professional upgrading.

The growing demand and the economic pattern from each region set a higher search to a specific area of Speech Therapy. The industries' concentration in Minas Gerais state belongs to 6<sup>th</sup> Region, propitiate the growing of the occupational audiology's service. The speech therapist who works in this area is responsible for monitoring the workers' health and preventing future auditory problems<sup>13,14</sup>.

Study tells that the major difficulties of speech therapists insert at the job market are related to the lack of knowledge about the possibilities of

performing, academic formation at the graduation specially clinic and the growing of competitiveness in the face of growing of the number of professionals at the market. As enablers, are quoted the net of contacts, the planning and identification of opportunities, the continuing education and the ability at activities performances<sup>15</sup>.

Related to the graduation it is observed that there is a major concentration in Minas Gerais. That can be explained by the concentration of graduation courses in Speech Therapy at the State. From 14 Colleges that offer the speech therapy course at 6<sup>th</sup> Region, 9 are in Minas Gerais<sup>16</sup>, being the first course created in 1990 at University Methodist Center Izabela Hendrix<sup>17</sup>. In 2000, it was created the first public course of Speech Therapy in the state, at UFMG<sup>18</sup>. At PUC MG, the course was implanted in 2002<sup>19</sup>. In 2008, was recognized at FEAD MG and at FUMEC University (Mineira Foundation of Education and Culture)<sup>20,21</sup>.

At this present study it was verified that more than half of the professionals has specialization and 5,5% from who was investigated referred having master, what corroborates to established of literature<sup>22</sup>. Similar studies made with newly graduated speech therapists pointed out that specialization was the most desired course, followed by master<sup>23</sup>.



It is noticed, therefore, that search to improvement has been a reality at Speech Therapy career.

About the monthly salary income, the major part of those were investigated pronounced receive from 2 to 5 minimum wages, that goes to the meeting with literature. The monthly income of speech therapist is higher than the real Brazilian income per month in the 2011 year<sup>24</sup> and equal to the professionals from Psychology, Nursing and Physical Education. Values referent to the Demographic Census 2000/IBGE<sup>25</sup>.

This present study showed too that the professional upgrading by specialization influences in the speech therapist's monthly income (Table 1), that increased in a significative degree to the professionals that committed in continuing education. These data are different from the study accomplished in Fortaleza city<sup>26</sup>.

The major part of these professionals works accomplishing occupational exam, followed by clinical audiological exam, hearing-impaired therapy and instruction and adjustment of Device of Individual Resonant Amplification (DIRA)- Aparelho de Amplificação Sonora Individual(AASI). This fact can be justified by the strong influence of rehabilitation view in this profession<sup>27</sup>, and care about hearing adjustment occurred because of labour activity<sup>28,29</sup>. However, there are few speech therapists committing in the survey areas, central auditory processing tests and labyrinthine tests. Notice that these areas are barely explored and, therefore, represent potentials niches of Speech Therapy's performing.

It was observed a major insert of professionals performing in different areas of Audiology in Minas Gerais state, what was acceptable once that among the states belonging to the 6<sup>th</sup> Region, it is what has a major number of speech therapists<sup>16</sup>.

It was verified that at the speech therapist's performing the contact's network is essential and the same receive routing from various professionals<sup>30</sup>, being that the otorhinolaryngologist, the pediatrician the orthodontist and the teachers those who direct patients to the speech therapists at most. Research in this area relates the otorhinolaryngologist and the teachers are the professionals that direct at most, reaffirming the findings of the present study. Dentists and speech therapists are also reported in the literature, in minor percentage than that found at this present study<sup>30</sup>. It is worth to mention that the routings were not only to the Audiology area, once these speech therapists attended patients from many areas.

The findings from this research show that most of people who were investigated is disgruntled with the profession. Possible explanation to this is the decrease wage and the lack of employment and no recognition at work. Besides, many speech therapists examined are newly graduated and they are still fitting themselves in the market. Study with speech therapists that perform in clinical audiology foreground that the major falls satisfied with the profession<sup>22</sup>.

It was observed that the level of professional satisfaction is directly related to the monthly salary income sustaining the literature<sup>26</sup>.

The characterization and the comprehension of the situation of the professionals who perform at Audiology area contribute to help the professional in his/her fill at the job market and support the knowing of new niches.

The sample does not represent a loyal portrait from reality, once that only 15,8% from registrated people at CRFa 6<sup>th</sup> Region participated, what shows the little adhesion of the professional to the category's initiatives. Moreover, the data contributes to the understanding of the speech therapists' work situation at the 6<sup>th</sup> Region and reinforce the necessity of continuing education as a way to increase and professional success.

It is recommended that the speech therapists who wants to work with Audiology invests in areas that represent niches of market to be explored.

Stands out the importance of continuing the studies, in order to help the professional insert at the job market and improving the professional qualification. It is clear the necessity of integrating academic and professional formation.

It is understood that the research must be stimulated once that represents a way of let out the profession, document new therapeutic practices and validated existent practices.

## ■ CONCLUSION

The speech therapists that perform in the Audiology area at 6<sup>th</sup> Region are, in a majority, women and are in 32 years old average. The major part graduated in Minas Gerais, has specialization, has in Speech Therapy his/her only source of income, receive from 2 to 5 minimum wage. About the performing area, it is noticed predominance in the realization of occupational audiological tests and clinical tests. They receive routings mainly from Otorhinolaryngologist, and make known that they are disgruntled with the profession. There was a

significant relation between the specialization and the professional satisfaction and the monthly salary income.

It was observed just a little speech therapist's insert in the survey areas, central auditory processing test, vestibular rehabilitation, hearing conservation program and labyrinthine tests.

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## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** investigar o perfil de formação e atuação do fonoaudiólogo na área de Audiologia na 6<sup>a</sup> Região, além de analisar a satisfação profissional, e verificar possíveis relações entre o grau de aperfeiçoamento profissional e de satisfação do fonoaudiólogo com a renda salarial mensal. **Métodos:** estudo transversal descritivo com fonoaudiólogos inscritos no Conselho Regional de Fonoaudiologia 6<sup>a</sup> Região por meio da aplicação de um questionário analisando as variáveis: formação acadêmica, áreas de atuação profissional, faixa salarial e satisfação com a profissão, no período de maio a outubro de 2012. **Resultados:** foram investigados 857 fonoaudiólogos. Destes, 63,8% atuam com Audiologia, 53,7% se graduaram em Minas Gerais, 51,4% possuem especialização e 5,5%, mestrado, o que se relacionou estatisticamente com maior renda salarial ( $p < 0,05$ ). No que se refere à fonte de renda, 84,1% relataram ter na Fonoaudiologia a sua única fonte de renda e a maior parte recebe de 2 a 5 salários mínimos. A maioria trabalha com audiologia ocupacional. O otorrinolaringologista é o profissional que mais encaminha pacientes. Dos investigados, 54,1% não estão satisfeitos com a profissão. Houve relação significativa entre satisfação profissional e renda. **Conclusão:** observou-se pouca inserção do fonoaudiólogo nas áreas de perícia, teste de processamento auditivo central, reabilitação vestibular, programa de conservação auditiva e testes labirínticos. Ressalta-se a importância da continuidade dos estudos para auxiliar na inserção profissional no mercado de trabalho e melhorar a qualificação profissional. Torna-se evidente a necessidade de se integrar formação acadêmica e profissional.

**DESCRITORES:** Audiologia; Área de Atuação Profissional; Mercado de Trabalho; Fonoaudiologia; Capacitação Profissional

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