

The value of Healthcare workers supports techniques to increase wellness and optimise patient care

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Abstract

The support techniques for healthcare workers play a significant role in promoting their wellness, which directly impacts the quality of patient care. By addressing the mental, physical, emotional, and professional needs of healthcare workers, healthcare organizations can enhance job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and foster a compassionate and efficient workforce. The end result is not only a better working environment for healthcare providers but also improved health outcomes for patients. Patient satisfaction can be defined as perception minus expectation. Dissatisfaction results when a patient's perception is less than their expectation. Small deeds can have a disproportionate effect on the patient satisfaction equation: time spent with a patient, holding a hand, or an act of kindness and caring all play a part in reducing fear and anxiety, dispelling anger, or offering hope.

Keywords: Healthcare, workers, and mental health

I. Introduction

Healthcare worker support techniques are essential in promoting overall wellness and optimizing patient care. These techniques aim to reduce stress, prevent burnout, and enhance the effectiveness of healthcare professionals, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes. (Maraqa et al., 2021)

II. Mental Health and Emotional Support

- **Value:** Healthcare workers often face high levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout due to long hours, demanding cases, and emotional strain from patient care. Providing emotional support through counseling, peer support programs, and mental health resources helps prevent burnout and fosters resilience. A mentally healthy workforce is more engaged, compassionate, and focused on delivering quality patient care.
- **Example:** Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), regular mental health check-ins, and access to therapy or counseling services. (Ripp & Shanafelt, 2020)

III. Training and Professional Development

- **Value:** Offering ongoing training and skill development opportunities enhances healthcare workers' confidence, competence, and job satisfaction. By keeping up-to-date with the latest healthcare techniques and technologies, they feel more capable of managing complex patient care, which translates into better patient outcomes. Continuous learning also empowers healthcare workers, reducing stress and burnout.
- **Example:** Providing access to certifications, workshops, and seminars on the latest medical procedures, patient care protocols, and mental health practices. (Huffman et al., 2021)

IV. Adequate Staffing and Workload Management

- **Value:** Ensuring that healthcare facilities are adequately staffed reduces the burden on individual healthcare workers and prevents overwork. This allows staff to focus more on quality patient care.

rather than being overwhelmed by excessive workloads. Proper staffing leads to more personalized attention for patients and reduces medical errors caused by fatigue or stress.

- **Example:** Employing sufficient support staff, like nurse aides or administrative assistants, to free up healthcare workers to focus on critical aspects of patient care. **(Mellins et al., 2020)**

V. **Team Collaboration and Communication**

- **Value:** Encouraging a collaborative work environment where healthcare workers from various disciplines communicate effectively improves both worker morale and patient care. Good communication between teams ensures that patient care is holistic, well-coordinated, and personalized. Supportive teamwork also reduces feelings of isolation and frustration among staff.
- **Example:** Implementing regular team meetings, interdisciplinary rounds, and digital communication platforms that allow for better coordination of care. **(McGorry et al., 2022)**

VI. **Flexible Scheduling and Work-Life Balance**

- **Value:** Flexible schedules and efforts to maintain a healthy work-life balance for healthcare workers help them manage personal and professional responsibilities. This reduces fatigue, increases job satisfaction, and promotes overall well-being. A well-rested and happy healthcare worker is more productive and effective, leading to better care for patients.
- **Example:** Offering options for flexible shifts, reduced hours for high-stress periods, and ensuring adequate breaks during shifts. **(Vogus et al., 2020)**

VII. **Physical Health Support and Ergonomics**

- **Value:** Healthcare workers often face physical strain from long hours, heavy lifting, and repetitive tasks. Providing ergonomic equipment, encouraging regular breaks, and offering wellness programs such as exercise classes or massage therapy helps prevent injuries and supports physical health. This, in turn, enables healthcare workers to care for patients without risking their own health.
- **Example:** Providing standing desks, lift-assist devices, or ergonomic chairs, and organizing on-site fitness programs or subsidized gym memberships. **(Mellins et al., 2020)**

VIII. **Recognition and Reward Systems**

- **Value:** Recognizing and rewarding healthcare workers for their hard work and dedication improves job satisfaction, morale, and retention rates. Acknowledging their contributions boosts motivation and encourages them to continue delivering high-quality care to patients. This recognition also promotes a positive and supportive workplace culture.
- **Example:** Creating award programs, offering bonuses, and celebrating achievements publicly in meetings or newsletters. **(Taylor et al., 2022)**

IX. **Access to Resources and Technology**

- **Value:** Providing healthcare workers with access to the latest tools, technology, and resources helps streamline tasks, reduce errors, and improve patient outcomes. Technology allows healthcare workers to focus on higher-level care tasks, while automation and digital tools reduce administrative burdens and free up time for patient interaction.
- **Example:** Implementing electronic health records (EHRs), providing mobile devices for patient monitoring, or offering access to AI-driven tools for diagnostic support. **(Shreffler et al., 2020)**

X. **Crisis Management and Support During Emergencies**

- **Value:** Healthcare workers are often on the front lines of crises (e.g., pandemics, natural disasters, or mass casualty events). Providing structured crisis management training, emotional debriefing, and additional resources during such times ensures they remain focused, efficient, and emotionally supported. This also helps in managing the pressure of handling critical patient cases.
- **Example:** Offering specific crisis training programs, mental health support post-crisis, and adequate rest after intense periods of work. **(Shanafelt et al., 2021)**

The support techniques for healthcare workers play a significant role in promoting their wellness, which directly impacts the quality of patient care. By addressing the mental, physical, emotional, and professional needs of healthcare workers, healthcare organizations can enhance job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and foster a compassionate and efficient workforce. The end result is not only a better working environment for healthcare providers but also improved health outcomes for patients. **(Oakman et al., 2020)**

The World Health Organisation recognised the vital role healthcare workers play in improving health service coverage and maximising the right of everybody to the highest attainable standards of health. However, they highlighted that this workforce (estimated to be 65 million globally) will have a projected shortfall of 15 million by 2030. Whilst the majority of the projected shortfall is likely to be in

low- and middle-income countries, they emphasised problems with education, employment, deployment, retention, and performance of healthcare workers throughout all countries, particularly when funded publicly which can cause budgetary restriction. The National Health Service (NHS) is the publicly funded healthcare system in England, and the second largest single-payer healthcare system in the world. **(Blake et al., 2020)**

As an organisation, the NHS consists of a huge, diverse workforce of > 1 million people including clinical and non-clinical teams. Hospitals are some of the largest organisations within the NHS and are the hubs in which the biggest groups of healthcare workers are clustered. Providing all of the acute care and a large proportion of all elective surgical and outpatient care, hospitals often employ hundreds, or even several thousand, healthcare workers. Each hospital could be viewed as a community with its own culture and complexities. Working patterns are varied, with shift, part-time, flexible and off-site working, and there is a range of different contexts within the workplace itself, all of which bring their own challenges for maintaining a healthy workforce. **(Balasubramanian et al., 2021)**

The health and well-being of healthcare workers has been brought into sharp focus since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, declining health and increasing stress levels amongst healthcare workers was first highlighted 10–15 years before, alongside concerns about the impact of this on staff and patient outcomes. The health of healthcare workers was shown to have a major influence on absenteeism, presenteeism and staff well-being generally. Unfortunately, in the NHS, staff sickness absence was 27% higher than in any other UK public sector organisation. The predominant cause was poor mental and physical well-being, with an estimated 40% of NHS employees unwell with stress every year. **(Melnik et al., 2021)**

Presenteeism impacts the whole workforce and increases pressure within the service affecting quality of services and financial performance. The increasing work demands within healthcare, resulting from a lack of time, financial resources, increasing patient demand and workforce shortages, can have damaging effects upon psychological, social and physical well-being, and are key factors in stress, fatigue and burn-out. Certainly, even pre-pandemic, it was demonstrated that the overall health and well-being of NHS staff was deteriorating, with approximately 50% of the NHS workforce overweight or obese partially as a result of poor diet and lack of physical activity throughout the working day. Putting pressure on staff to come to work when unwell is associated with poorer engagement with their jobs, potentially leading to decreased productivity and performance, increasing the likelihood of making medical-related errors. Presenteeism and poor staff health can unwittingly decrease quality of care, leading to adverse effects on patient outcomes, including impact on recovery or rehabilitation. **(David et al., 2021)**

Patient satisfaction can be defined as perception minus expectation. Dissatisfaction results when a patient's perception is less than their expectation. Small deeds can have a disproportionate effect on the patient satisfaction equation: time spent with a patient, holding a hand, or an act of kindness and caring all play a part in reducing fear and anxiety, dispelling anger, or offering hope. **(Shreffler et al., 2020)**

Healthcare organizations aim to efficiently manage limited resources to provide high-quality, cost-effective care while maximizing patient satisfaction. Key challenges include minimizing expenditures, optimizing resource allocation, and strategically scheduling staff, patients, and resources. Effective scheduling through careful assignment of personnel and resources is vital for healthcare systems to maximize operational efficiency and the quality of patient care. In hospitals, the managerial component of patient care continues to take on increasing significance. Moreover, healthcare providers devote considerable effort to managing these resources effectively to ensure high-quality patient care and maximum operational efficiency. Increased staff productivity and optimal resource utilization resulting from effective scheduling can improve patient outcomes. **(Juba et al., 2024)**

Patient care improvement pertains to an increase in the efficiency of staff and resource allocation, leading to enhanced patient satisfaction and health outcomes. This could be measured using a combination of methods, including patient satisfaction surveys, health outcomes, process measures, patient safety indicators, and efficiency measures, depending on the specific goals of the healthcare organization. Furthermore, globally, the increased pressure from factors such as the immense and escalating cost of healthcare, standard expectations from patients, and aging populations is challenging the healthcare industry, and the need to devise a panacea for these recurring issues is vital. **(Wald, 2020)**

The importance of having the appropriate staff in the ideal location at the right time was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the unpredictably high volume and fluctuating needs for care delivery. Aging staff and patients, a nursing shortage, and an increase in the complexity of care across all settings exacerbated the operational constraints of the pandemic. Healthcare management relies on staff schedules. This involves overseeing patient appointments, predicting

patient service demands, monitoring the availability of doctors and nurses, and implementing automated resource allocation. Urgent care medical centers and emergency rooms might require assistance in projecting patient influx against staff availability. Despite the prevalence of schedule optimization in various industries, many organizations continue to adopt this practice. Efficient scheduling not only reduces patient wait times but also optimizes resource utilization. (David et al., 2021)

Conclusion

The importance of organisations making a concerted effort to improve workplace culture around mental health is a key element of the Beyond Blue's 'Good practice framework for mental health and wellbeing in police and emergency services organisations'. Recent literature has highlighted the importance of psychological interventions being supported by broader strategies to demonstrate that organisations are committed to address systemic and workplace cultures that contribute to poor psychological wellbeing. HCWs discussed the desire for organisational strategies to improve the workplace culture around mental health. This included creating space for informal and formal discussions around mental health; active promotion and encouragement of local initiatives; proactive wellbeing initiatives and inclusive planning of supports; and embedded structures that recognise mental health needs. These strategies were discussed as important to reduce the experiences of stigma in the workplace and improve help-seeking behaviours. (McGorry et al., 2022)

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