

# Engaging sexual health nurses in research and quality improvement is associated with higher job satisfaction and lower rates of unscheduled time off work

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## Background

Given current nursing shortages, poor retention rates and high unscheduled time-off work, it is important that we identify strategies and factors which maintain job satisfaction and reduce unscheduled time off work.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Hypothesis

Nurses actively engaged in research or quality improvement projects (QIPs) are happier at work, perceive higher quality patient care and experience lower levels of unscheduled time off work.

## Approach

An online anonymous survey of nurses was distributed via social media and email between March – April 2019

5-point Likert scales were used to capture:

- Job Satisfaction
- Wellbeing at work
- Perceived levels of patient care
- Unscheduled time off work

Other data collected included:

- Inpatient / Outpatient & number of years nursing experience
- Involvement in any of the following activities in the previous 12 months: Audits, service evaluation projects, individual projects or research, presentations for conferences or nursing forums, published literature or involvement in project work of any kind.

## Results (See Graph 1)

350 nurses completed the online survey...

- 177 out-patient / 173 in-patient
- 232/350 (66%) had >10 years of nursing experience.
- 268/350 (77%) had engaged in a research project or QIP in the previous 12 months

Nurses engaged in research or QIP had highly significantly:

- Higher Job satisfaction
- Greater levels of wellbeing at work
- Higher perceived levels of patient care
- Lower levels of unscheduled time off work

Nurses that felt supported with professional development were more likely to be engaged in research and QIPs (chi-square statistic is 52.205,  $p=0.0001$ )

Nurses in out-patient settings were significantly more likely to feel supported with their professional development - 68% vs 54% ( $p=0.007133$ )

## Significance

In this pilot online survey of nurses, we found that there is an association between those engaged in research or QIP with higher levels of job satisfaction, wellbeing, perceived levels of care, and reduced unscheduled time off work.

Although these associations are significant, we could not control for confounding factors; however we suggest that, paradoxically, involving nurses in research or QIP in addition to their clinical work may actually improve workforce instability and job satisfaction. Healthcare systems need to ensure that all clinical staff have time and resources to engage in research and QIP - whatever their area of work.

### References:

1. Buchan J, Charlesworth A, Gershlick B, Seccombe I. A Critical Moment: NHS Staffing Trends, Retention and Attrition. Health Foundation, 2019
2. Brand SL, Thompson Coon J, Fleming LE, Carroll L, Bethel A, Wyatt K. Whole-system approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of healthcare workers: a systematic review. PLoS One. 2017;12(12):e0188418.

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Graph 1: Nurses engaged with Research/QIP and work related factors

