

HEALTHCARE EDITORIAL



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The why and how of clinician satisfaction, engagement and retention

Clinician satisfaction and engagement are equally important facets of the healthcare delivery system.

So much has been written about client satisfaction and patient engagement, and they are important facets of the healthcare delivery system. But what about clinician satisfaction and engagement? Aren't these equally important? The short answer is "yes."

For both human services and post-acute care, there are major problems with provider recruitment and retention. By some estimates, the projected supply of behavioral health workers will be short of anticipated demand by 250,000 by the year 2025¹ while long-term care turnover rates are 55 percent to 75 percent for nurses and 100 percent for nurses' aides² in some cases. So what is going on — why are clinicians dissatisfied and or disengaged?

Intuition suggests that people quit jobs because they aren't paid well enough and to some extent, research supports that. In one survey,³ 44 percent of workers said they would quit their job for more money. That makes sense since we all would like to be paid better. What's interesting is that the next three reasons employees would quit their jobs included:

- Desire to work for a company with a higher purpose or mission
- Not feeling appreciated
- Being bored and unchallenged by their work

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1 Levine, D. (2018) What's the Answer to the Shortage of Mental Health Care Providers? US News and World Report.

2 Barbera, E. (2014) The Keys to Reducing Turnover in Long Term Care. Downloaded from: <https://www.mcknights.com/blogs/the-world-according-to-dr-el/the-keys-to-reducing-turnover-in-long-term-care/>

3 Kong, C. (2018) Quitting your job. Infographic downloaded from: <https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/salaries-and-skills/quitting-your-job>

They want to think, collaborate and actively contribute in their role as much as possible.

For businesses in general, money is certainly important but it's not everything.

Human services and post-acute care are both similar and different than general healthcare particularly in terms of the stressors of the work. In general, healthcare stressors include things like inadequate staffing, excessive workloads, poor leadership, lack of support and lack of opportunity for growth. In human services communities like behavioral healthcare, providers have all of that plus the emotional burden of caring for the mentally unwell, high levels of violence, dealing with forced detentions, client self-harm and underfunded services.⁴

Like other healthcare colleagues, post-acute provider nurses and nurse's aides are challenged with the problem of low staffing levels but they are also affected by lower quality of care, for-profit ownership and higher bed count.⁵ These things contribute to higher absenteeism and higher turnover. If you believe quality of care is also compromised, you are mostly correct. Most studies do show a negative impact on care quality but some studies actually show no change or even an improvement in quality. This counterintuitive effect may simply be because the people who left needed to leave. After all, not all turnover is bad – just most.

What should organizations do to improve retention?

First, paying competitively helps but even that may not be enough because the large number of openings combined with the diminishing supply of providers may require organizations to rethink what “competitive” means. Individuals want a paycheck but they want more than just that from an employer. They want to be treated with respect and they want a say in their jobs. People don't want to simply go through the motions at work. They want to think, collaborate and actively contribute in their role as much as possible.

Take care of your staff. You're going to need them in the future even more than you have in the past.

To learn more about clinician satisfaction, [click here to watch the on-demand webinar Improving Clinician Satisfaction & Driving Outcomes.](#)

4 Johnson, J, Hall, LH, Berzins, K, Baker, J, Melling, K. and Thompson, C. (2018) Mental healthcare staff well-being and burnout: A narrative review of trends, causes, implications, and recommendations for future interventions. *IntJMentHlthNurs* 27, 20-32

5 Castle, NG, Engberg, J. (2006) Organizational characteristics associated with staff turnover in nursing homes. *Gerontologist*. Feb;46(1):62-73.

About the author

Dr. Dennis Morrison is an experienced executive and leader specializing in behavioral health and social services. His career has focused on integrating clinical care and technology to improve care delivery and empower people to achieve better healthcare. From 2012-2017, he served as the first Chief Clinical Officer for Netsmart, providing internal clinical guidance throughout Netsmart about clinical workflows, psychometrics and leadership.

About Netsmart

Netsmart innovates electronic health records (EHRs), solutions and services that are powerful, intuitive and easy-to-use. Our platform provides accurate, up-to-date information which is easily accessible to care team members in behavioral health, care at home, senior living and social services. We make the complex simple and personalized so our clients can concentrate on what they do best: provide services and treatment that support whole-person care.

By leveraging the powerful Netsmart network, care providers can seamlessly and securely integrate information across communities, collaborate on the most effective treatments and improve outcomes for those in their care. Our streamlined systems and personalized workflows put relevant information at the fingertips of users when and where they need it.

For nearly 50 years, Netsmart has been committed to providing a common platform to integrate care. SIMPLE. PERSONAL. POWERFUL.