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METEOR research on healthcare worker retention featured in 'Healthcare in Europe' magazine

From the Editors

We're delighted to bring you the outcomes of more than two years of in-depth

research into the root causes behind the growing trend of healthcare workers leaving their hospital jobs. Our comprehensive approach has encompassed literature review, surveys, co-creation workshops to gather valuable insights, and consultations with healthcare experts. Today, we present the results.

In this Special Double Issue of our Newsletter, we showcase the highlights of our findings in the form of two published articles. For a deeper dive into our research and more granular insights, we invite you to explore our website. At the moment, we continue fine-tuning our next publication, along with a toolbox which will provide recommendations for healthcare policymakers and administrators grappling with the issue of retention. We are also preparing for our final webinar on 26 January – and we cordially invite you to attend!

At the heart of Project METEOR's mission is a commitment to collaboration. We have actively engaged with other researchers, fostering dialogue and the exchange of knowledge with practitioners and policymakers. Our close ties with projects from the Health Cluster, AHEAD, ROUTE-HWF, TaSHI, and OASES, along with our participation in significant healthcare sector events, have enriched our perspectives. Explore the dedicated section: Sharing our research, to glean valuable lessons from these experiences.

We are proud to share that our findings have garnered attention in the media, amplifying the impact of our work.

As we look forward to the upcoming year, stay tuned for more exciting developments. In the meantime, please accept our best wishes for a joyous holiday season!

UPCOMING EVENT:

26 January 2024: METEOR Final Webinar
(10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. CET)

see our website and social media for updates.

METEOR PUBLICATIONS:

METEOR research on factors preventing healthcare workers from quitting hospitals published in *INQUIRY*

Job satisfaction, a clear career development path and work-life balance are key factors that prevent physicians and nurses from leaving their jobs, Project METEOR found in a literature review on this pressing challenge for healthcare managers.

The researchers reviewed articles on retention and turnover among hospital employees published over the last 10 years in three scientific literature databases: PubMed, Embase, and CINAHL. Their analysis focused on 37 articles concerning the European healthcare sector and identified six themes among determinants that affect the intention to change jobs: personal characteristics, job demands, employment services, working conditions, work relationships and organisational culture.

Even as demographic changes and a growing number of chronically ill patients are pushing up demand for healthcare around the world, hospitals are facing a lack of personnel. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2016 the global shortage of doctors stood at 4.3 million, while in 2020 5.9 million nursing posts were vacant. The WHO predicts that by 2030 global unmet demand for healthcare workers will reach almost 14 million.

"The problem is growing, and the pandemic has made it even more obvious," said Project METEOR researcher Peter de Winter from Spaarne Gasthuis, Haarlem and Hoofddorp. "Retaining people with education and experience is crucial. Any decision to change jobs is complex, so we wanted to understand what factors push nurses and doctors out, and what prompts them to stay."

High turnover rates impact hospitals, patients and healthcare providers. Hospitals face higher recruiting costs, while frequent personnel changes reduce the quality of care, resulting in increased numbers of medical errors and higher mortality. High turnover also reduces productivity and can harm the morale of remaining employees, leading to further resignations.

The METEOR study shows that intentions to change jobs vary widely across countries and professions. For instance, more than 60% of Turkish nurses intend to leave their jobs, compared with 11.7% in Italy, 14% in Germany and 16.7% in Switzerland. Among physicians, the share that intend to leave was lowest in Switzerland at 14%, followed by Norway at 21%, Poland at 23% and Germany at 28%.

"The large number of medical staff that is thinking about quitting their jobs is worrying, but our research shows that it's possible to reverse their thinking and convince them to stay," said METEOR researcher Neeltje de Vries, an expert in nursing science from Spaarne Gasthuis. "We learned from our study that if hospital managers want to prevent nurses and doctors from quitting their jobs, they should take a closer look at job satisfaction, make sure that their work-life balance is secured and that they can see a clear career development path."

de Vries N, Boone A, Godderis L, et al. The Race to Retain Healthcare Workers: A Systematic Review on Factors that Impact Retention of Nurses and Physicians in Hospitals. *INQUIRY: The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision, and Financing*. 2023;60. doi: [10.1177/00469580231159318](10.1177/00469580231159318) (open access).

Strategies for enhancing nurse and doctor retention in European healthcare: insights from Project METEOR research

In an article published in *Healthcare*, researchers from Project METEOR show that onboarding and mentoring programs for nurses and medical doctors can help retain them in hospitals and decrease the rotation of medical personnel.

With the healthcare sector grappling with significant labour shortages, exacerbated by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and a surge in retirements, understanding and implementing effective retention measures is imperative.

Researchers from Project METEOR analysed articles published between 2012 and 2022 in three scientific literature databases: PubMed, Embase, and CINAHL, which discuss different types of interventions hospitals undertake to retain workers. Their article, "Retaining Healthcare Workers: A Systematic Review of Strategies for Sustaining Power in the Workplace", identifies 12 areas where hospital management can focus their activities: onboarding, transition programmes to a different unit, stress coping, social support, extra staffing, coping with the demands of patient care, work relationships, development opportunities and department resources, job environment, work organization, recruitment approach, and technological innovations.

The analysis shows that onboarding and mentorship programs for nurses successfully limited the outflow of these professionals from hospitals. Also, several studies showed satisfactory results from introducing tools helping nurses and doctors cope with stress.

"Many studies have demonstrated that support in the form of onboarding and mentorship is particularly important for nurses at the beginning of their career path, as more than 50% of newly graduated nurses leave their job within the first year due to culture shock," says Neeltje De Vries, an expert in nursing science from Spaarne Gasthuis and one of the authors. "Several studies also emphasised that new generations require more support in their workplace compared to previous ones."

Authors confirmed earlier findings that salary is not the primary reason for leaving healthcare in high-income countries.

The analysis also demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all intervention. Nevertheless, studying the success stories of implemented interventions can help hospital managers design their programmes. When doing so, they should ensure that deliberate action matches their healthcare workers' needs and is in line with the hospital's mission and vision.

de Vries N, Lavreysen O, Boone A, Bouman J, Szemik S, Baranski K, Godderis L, De Winter P. Retaining Healthcare Workers: A Systematic Review of Strategies for Sustaining Power in the Workplace. Healthcare. 2023; 11(13):1887. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11131887

SHARING OUR RESEARCH:

METEOR presents its findings at the European Public Health Conference

Meteor researchers Olivia Lavreysen (KU Leuven) and Marco Enea (Università degli Studi di Palermo) showcased the project's findings at the 16th European Public Health Conference, "Our Food, Our Health, Our Earth: A Sustainable Future for Humanity" in Dublin on 8-11 November 2023.

During a panel discussion on "How to solve shortages and uneven distribution of health workers in Europe?" Olivia Lavreysen presented Project METEOR's objectives, methodology, and outcomes. She engaged in a fruitful discussion with colleagues from projects ROUTE, TaSHI, and AHEAD.

In another panel focusing on "Health of the Workforce," Marco Enea discussed the results of the METEOR survey that sought to estimate the proportion of nurses and physicians who intend to leave their hospital positions, and to identify the factors influencing these decisions. The data revealed that 16.5% of physicians and 8.4% of nurses are contemplating leaving their jobs. While the inclination to quit varies among countries, certain patterns emerged. Notably, age plays a significant role, with younger physicians and nurses exhibiting a higher propensity to leave. Job dissatisfaction emerged as a common reason for resignations. Additionally, emotional exhaustion was identified as a determining factor for the intention to leave among nurses.

METEOR presents at the Congress of the Italian Society of Medical Statistics and Clinical Epidemiology

Laura Maniscalco and Marco Enea from the Università degli Studi di Palermo presented the results of a Project METEOR survey, which explains the complex dynamics of job resignations by healthcare professionals, at the 12th National Congress of the Italian Society of Medical Statistics and Clinical Epidemiology (Congresso Nazionale Società Italiana di Statistica Medica ed Epidemiologia Clinica – SISMEC).

The METEOR survey, conducted in eight hospitals across four countries (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland), aimed to estimate the prevalence of the intention to leave both the hospital and the profession among nurses and physicians, along with assessing the determinants of these decisions. A total of 381 responses were obtained for physicians, and 1,351 for nurses. The data show that 17% of doctors and 13.6% of nurses are considering leaving their jobs.

In her presentation, Laura Maniscalco showed that a challenging hospital environment significantly contributes to increased intentions to leave among doctors. By contrast, for nurses the intention appears to be rooted in dissatisfaction with professional practice rather than the hospital context. Furthermore, the survey results indicate that work engagement is a crucial determinant for nurses, while depersonalisation plays a pivotal role in both nurses' and physicians' intentions to leave.

Marco Enea showed that the METEOR survey identified significant individual and work environment characteristics that play a role in explaining the intention to leave. While some differences exist from country to country, depersonalisation and job dissatisfaction were found to be strong determinants of the intention to leave.

Both speakers stressed that recruitment and retention policies at the micro, meso and macro levels are imperative. Specifically, prioritising job satisfaction, fostering work engagement, and nurturing a positive working climate are strategic factors for promoting job retention. Nurses and physicians require tailored policies. It is particularly important to support healthcare workers who are at high risk of leaving their profession, such as younger nurses.


METEOR researchers discuss unequal access to healthcare at the EU Parliament

Anke Boone, a Project METEOR researcher from KU Leuven, participated in a policy discussion addressing the lack of access to healthcare for many European citizens. The event was organised by the research project AHEAD and took place at the European Parliament.

Countries such as Italy and Romania are currently grappling with the challenge of 'medical deserts,' areas with limited access to health services. Project AHEAD is studying such areas with the aim to explore evidence-based policy solutions to improve healthcare accessibility, particularly in underserved regions.

The event, "Addressing medical deserts in Europe: a call to action," held on April 27, 2023 and hosted by MEP Beatrice Covassi, brought together diverse groups of experts, including Katarzyna Ptak-Bufkens (DG Sante), Paolo Michelutti (Coordinator of the new Joint Action on Health workforce planning and forecasting), Dr John Wynn-Jones (EURIPA, the European Rural and Isolated Practitioners Association), Tomas Zapata (WHO European Regional office), Dorota Tomalak (Committee of the Regions), and Marina Royo de Blas (DG AGRI).
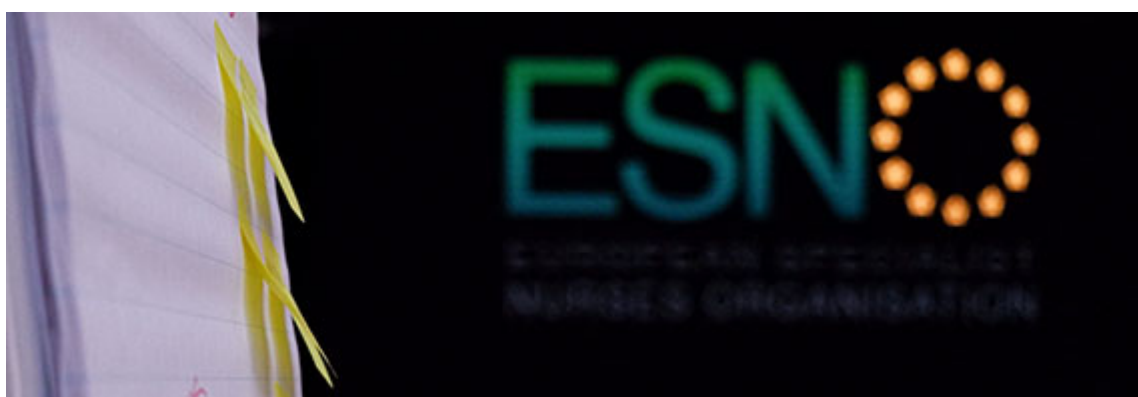
METEOR researchers discuss strategies for healthcare worker retention at ESNO World Café

Researchers Anke Boone from KU Leuven and Neeltje de Vries of Spaarne Gasthuis discussed Project METEOR and its preliminary results at a conference focused on Health Workforce and Nurse Shortage, organised by the European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO).

The ESNO World Cafe was a two-day event that took place in Brussels on 20-21 April, 2023, gathering approximately 100 participants from the healthcare sector, including nursing and patients' organisations, hospitals, European agencies, institutes, and

research projects focused on the health workforce.

The meeting provided a platform for exchanging ideas on how to address the shortage and retention of healthcare workers. It facilitated knowledge sharing and aimed to discover new opportunities for action in this area.

METEOR IN THE MEDIA:

Prof. Godderis spoke to *Artsenkrant* about the METEOR study

In an interview with *Artsenkrant*, a leading Belgian magazine for doctors, Prof. Lode Godderis discussed the findings from the Project METEOR study on factors that influence physicians' and nurses' decisions to remain in their hospital jobs.

"Caregivers stay for a variety of reasons, and it's certainly not just about pay," Prof. Godderis told *Artsenkrant*. "Our study shows that job satisfaction, a clear career development path and work-life balance are key factors help retain hospitals doctors and nurses."

The interview can be read here.

METEOR research on healthcare worker retention featured in 'Healthcare in Europe' magazine

Project METEOR's research on interventions to retain hospital nurses and doctors has garnered attention from 'Healthcare in Europe', a leading European magazine for hospital managers.

INSIDE PROJECT METEOR:

METEOR team meets to streamline research on job retention in healthcare

Representatives of the METEOR consortium's five member institutions met on 11-12 September in Palermo, Italy to plan out the final months of the project and ensure the broad dissemination of research findings to all interested parties.

Project coordinator Lode Godderis provided a comprehensive overview of METEOR's progress spanning the past 2.5 years. Lode, from KU Leuven, highlighted the critical areas of focus for the remaining six months and expressed his deep appreciation to all members for their dedication, collaboration, and the trust fostered within the team. He then handed the floor to Laura Maniscalco from UNIPA, who presented a paper she's currently writing with Neeltje de Vries from Spaarne Gasthuis. Their work delves into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare workers' job retention. The preliminary findings reveal a significant increase in the number of doctors and nurses considering leaving their hospital roles. It also shows that the factors influencing their decisions have evolved.

Next, Olga Markiewicz from Aldgate addressed the communication of METEOR's research findings. She showcased recent updates to the METEOR website, which has been revamped to focus more on project results. In the second part of her presentation, Olga talked about press releases, newsletters, the final booklet, other communications tools, and the social media strategy that will be used in the final months of the project to ensure that METEOR's findings are accessible not only to researchers but also to healthcare managers and policymakers.

The second part of the meeting centred around the development of an online toolbox to summarise METEOR's research findings and make them easily accessible to stakeholders. Szymon Szemik presented the core concepts and logic behind the toolbox, while his SUM colleague Kamil Barański provided a step-by-step demonstration of the toolbox's functionalities, highlighting potential challenges. During the discussion, consortium members managed to simplify the design, enhanced the user experience, and reached a consensus on its content.

Next, the team moved into a reflective session on the project. Participants focused on identifying areas where improvements could have been made, particularly regarding workload, communication, and planning. The meeting concluded with a discussion on possibilities for future collaborations.

Project METEOR (Mental health: focus on retention of healthcare workers) aims to increase scientific knowledge about why workers in European Union health professions change jobs. It seeks to identify and analyse the main predictors of job retention in four European countries (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland); develop evidence-based policy recommendations through continuous stakeholder engagement; and present these results in an easily accessible online toolbox. The project is executed by KU Leuven, the Medical University of Silesia, the University of Palermo, Spaarne Gasthuis, and Aldgate Strategy Group. The project is co-funded by the

3rd Health Programme of the European Union.
To find out more visit our website:
www.meteorproject.eu

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