

Positive practice environments for health care professionals

Quality Workplaces for Quality Care



Mobility of health professionals in Zambia: Raising the stakes for action on PPEs in Zambia

Background

Shortages of staff are prevalent in all areas and at all types of health facilities in Zambia.

There is a net failure to recruit and retain health workers in the public health system due to high health worker attrition rates, the attrition rates are most severe in rural areas.

Dissatisfaction with professional work environments: a major reason given for moving away from rural areas.

Consequence: the exacerbation of the existing inequitable distribution of health workers in the country.

Assessment of practice environments in Zambia

Professional recognition

- High perception of unfair recognition and reward structures for employee contribution and/or performance.
- A third of school leavers interviewed opted not to choose a career in health due to perceived poor work environments and conditions of service.

Management practices

- The average annual rate of attrition is 4.48% for the total workforce.
- High migration of health workers, especially away from rural areas and away from the public health system.

Support structures

- Regulatory bodies are too severely underfunded to perform their oversight roles of ensuring safe working conditions.

Education

- There is a general dissatisfaction/uncertainty over career progression ladders and opportunities for professional education, development and career advancement.

Occupational Health & Safety

- Heavy workloads, staffing norms - there is a deficit/shortage of approx. 20,000 HCWs to meet today's population health needs.
- Some 94% of health workers felt insecure and rated their risk to get infected and/or injured from their work place as very high.
- No more than 25% of health workers interviewed felt they had adequate protection from workplace injuries.

Conclusions

Financial incentives are necessary, but they have limited impact in isolation.

Improving professional practice environments has the potential to:

- 1 Entice new recruits to health careers
- 2 Reduce attrition and improve retention rates, especially in rural areas
- 3 Improve patient care.

Urgent steps need to be taken to stimulate action to address the issue of PPEs if performance and patient outcomes are to be significantly enhanced.

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