



Summary of national study on recruitment and retention of non-consultant hospital doctors

Introduction

This summary presents an overview of the findings of a nationally representative study on recruitment and retention of non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs). A scoping review of the literature identified a wide range of factors that influence decisions to stay or leave a job, profession or organisation. These issues, which include factors relevant to the job, the organisation and the individual non-consultant doctor working in the Irish health services are taken into account in this study.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methods sequential explanatory design and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed in accordance with their respective paradigms. A total of 637 NCHDs took part in an online survey and 38 NCHDs participated in telephone interviews. Six individuals working in HR in the HSE also took part in interviews. Descriptive, bivariate and regression analyses were conducted on the quantitative data and thematic analysis carried out on the qualitative data.

Key findings from NCHDs study

The results indicate that:

- three-fifths of NCHDs intend to leave their job in the next two years. Of these, 38.5% intend to leave Ireland without a plan to return.
- NCHDs perceive their work to have a significant impact on the lives of others, are highly engaged in their work, and have positive views of their co-workers.
- NCHDs' overall scores on the training index (39%) and the promotion index (41%) were low. The interviews with NCHDs highlighted several issues with training: lengthy training period, requirement to rotate and therefore re-locate, and inequities in training posts across NCHDs from inside and outside of the EU. Interviewees commented that the inequities in training give rise to inequities in promotion.
- The lack of clear promotional or career pathways in Ireland was highlighted as an issue specific to this group and this may be exerting a direct influence on their intentions to leave: 43% of NCHDs intending to leave their job in the next two years indicated that better opportunities elsewhere was a highly relevant factor.
- Overall level of satisfaction with pay is low (index mean of 30%). Three main components are involved in this dissatisfaction. First, the administrative structures for pay are highly problematic where the rotated nature of the training scheme requires frequent changes in employer. Second, although ongoing professional development is a requirement, the cost of attending such training is not reimbursed. Third, unpaid overtime is relatively frequent among NCHDs.
- NCHDs reported relatively high levels of burnout (index mean 59%), and 27% reported that they made decisions without supervision more often than they would like. Interviewees also commented on their sense of burnout and responsibility overload and identified lack of IT infrastructure and additional pressure arising from staff being on leave as compounding these difficulties. Forty-four percent of NCHDs indicating an intent to leave their current job

in the next two years cited problematic staffing levels as highly relevant to their intention to leave.

Findings from the regression analysis

A total of 30 individual, employment, structural and perceptual / attitudinal characteristics were examined simultaneously in multiple regression models to establish which were the most important predictors of three outcomes – intent to stay or leave current job, organisation or medical profession.

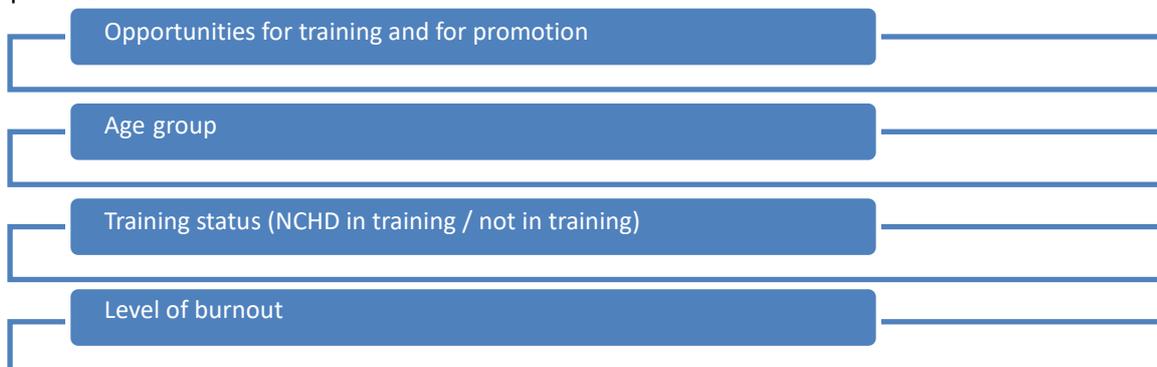


Figure 1: Factors of key importance in understanding NCHDs' job and career intentions

Further analysis that focused on perceptions of the job and the organisation confirmed the importance of global job satisfaction, organisational commitment and burnout in predicting NCHDs' job intentions and showed that different aspects of the work and the organisation underpin or drive these three elements.

- Global job satisfaction is driven by perceived quality of workplace, impact, satisfaction with pay, effort-reward ratio, training opportunities, information sharing and perceptions of co-workers.
- Organisational commitment is driven by perceived quality of workplace, information sharing, impact and perceptions of co-workers
- Burnout is driven by responsibility overload, satisfaction with pay, effort-reward ratio, training opportunities and impact.

This study was commissioned by the Public Service Pay Commission (<https://paycommission.gov.ie>) and implemented by Research Matters Ltd (<https://researchmatters.eu/>). We would like to thank all those who took part in the study and the Irish Medical Council and the HSE National Doctors Training & Planning Unit for the assistance they provided.