

**Improving Healthcare Worker Retention through Decreasing Burnout and Increasing
Employee Engagement**

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Abstract

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the time that has elapsed since, health systems across the country have encountered unprecedented staffing challenges that have proved to be detrimental both operationally and financially. Turnover within many systems is at a historical high—with many resignations resulting from employee burnout and low engagement. For the first time in over 15 years, hospital CEOs have collectively ranked financial challenges as a lesser concern than personnel shortages (ACHE, 2022). Now, more than ever, healthcare leaders must implement innovative strategies to combat these unsustainably high rates of turnover. This essay utilizes a collection of studies and articles to form a comprehensive approach to improve healthcare worker retention by reducing burnout and increasing employee engagement. Many of the retention best-practices presented within this document are specific to the healthcare industry, however, employee engagement strategies from other industries are included as well.

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Preface

I would like to sincerely thank my essay advisor, Mike Evans, for providing his continued insight and unwavering support throughout the writing process. My graduate experience has been significantly enhanced from having Mike as both a professor and mentor, and I look forward to staying connected in the coming years. I would also like to express immense gratitude to Dr. Audrey Murrell and Dr. Deborah Good for taking the time to read my essay and engage in thoughtful discussion surrounding it. Your insights regarding the importance of leaders expressing empathy to instill an organization's mission are something that I appreciated and will continue to prioritize in my career. I would also like to thank my preceptor, Tim Kagle, for allowing me to be part of the team at UPMC Presbyterian over the last 15 months. My time there has shown me what effective leadership looks like in the healthcare setting and has exposed me to many of the practices mentioned throughout this essay. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my colleagues, mentors, and professors that I have met throughout my time within the Department of Health Policy and Management for providing inspiration and support to me over the course of the last 2 years.

1.0 Introduction

Healthcare workers, particularly since the onset of the pandemic, have often been likened to superheroes for the selfless and empathetic qualities they possess and exhibit regularly as they perform their duties and provide care to those who need it. Skilled, intelligent, hardworking, brave, and bold: these are just some of the words used to describe the people who work relentlessly to better the lives of others. Sometimes, however, people can easily forget that healthcare workers are merely human—they can become burned out, be impacted deeply by the pain and loss that is inherently present within their professions, or can suffer from internal struggles and challenges in their own personal lives. While the turbulence caused by COVID-19 has given the nation's healthcare heroes the recognition they rightfully deserve, it has also resulted in unprecedented rates of turnover within the healthcare industry. Although healthcare entities have historically been primarily concerned with the patient experience, the current climate has forced leaders to reevaluate how they approach the employee experience.

Long gone are the days when solely the use of sign-on bonuses and standard benefits packages could attract or retain talent. Despite being one of the largest industries in the country, healthcare organizations lag far behind other sectors in terms of promoting employee engagement. The airline industry, specifically Southwest Airlines, has done a phenomenal job of providing a positive employee experience. Southwest has consistently emphasized that taking care of their employees allows their employees to take care of their customers. This concept has slowly begun to diffuse into the healthcare sector. With most healthcare organizations in the U.S. experiencing challenges related to staffing, those who are the most innovative and can offer the best experience to their employees inevitably come out on top.

This paper will provide a comprehensive assessment of various methods utilized by healthcare leaders to not only attract and retain, but to bring out the full potential of their employees. As previously mentioned, the healthcare industry has typically fallen far behind regarding employee engagement tactics implemented in other industries—however, challenging times have demanded healthcare leaders to adapt quickly.

2.0 Literature Review

A variety of sources were utilized to form this meta-analysis on improving healthcare worker retention. Many of the cited studies were found through use of PubMed and Google Scholar. Keywords used in these searches were “reducing burnout of healthcare workers” OR “improving employee engagement” OR “improving retention in healthcare”. Information was also derived from professional sources, such as: the American Hospital Association (AHA), Becker’s Hospital Review, and the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE).

3.0 Background

3.1 Reasons for Turnover

Turnover, or the rate at which employees leave an organization over a certain time period, is a challenge that health systems across the nation consistently attempt to overcome. Reasons for turnover can include, but are not limited to: a stressful or dissatisfactory work environment, discontent with one's immediate supervisor, an uncompetitive income compared to other institutions, career frustration, poor job fit, or a poor work-life balance. Although the reasons for turnover are largely multifactorial, there are two terms that can be used to generally describe why healthcare workers resign from their positions at such alarming rates: burnout and low employee engagement.

Employee burnout occurs when working conditions wear down an employee to the extent where they become physically, mentally, or emotionally exhausted. This fatigue can be caused by a multitude of factors that are common within the healthcare field, such as: inefficient workflows, dissatisfactory staffing ratios, long shifts, emotional stress, and financial stress. While these factors were prevalent prior to the pandemic, COVID-19 has exacerbated these issues as the country's dependence on healthcare professionals has dramatically increased. A survey administered by Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation revealed that the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of healthcare workers has been significant, with 62% of frontline workers reporting that their stress has had a negative impact on their mental health (Kirzinger et al., 2021). In addition, a staggering 70% of the youngest partition of frontline workers (18-29 years old) indicated that they felt the effects of burnout as a result of the pressures put upon them during the pandemic. This

statistic becomes abundantly clear when assessing the amount of graduate nurse turnover in recent years—with up to 30% of newly-licensed RNs leaving their first position within year one and up to 57% leaving within year 2 (Bowles and Candela, 2005).

Low employee engagement is another pervasive issue within the healthcare industry that negatively impacts aspects such as: profitability, revenue, the patient experience, and employee turnover. Employee engagement is a term used to describe the connection one feels with the work they do and the organization in which they belong. The Studer Group attests that engaged employees who understand the value of their work are more likely to provide better patient experiences and improve the bottom-line of an organization (Paris, 2014). There are typically 4 categories to describe an employee's level of engagement: highly engaged, moderately engaged, barely engaged, and disengaged. Staff who are highly engaged tend to hold positive interpretations of the work they do within their organization and may serve as an advocate to influence others to enjoy what they do as well. The work they carry out is exceptional and they usually tend to have high levels of retention. Moderately engaged employees enjoy the work they do, however, they are astutely aware of areas of improvement within their organization. Employees at this engagement level may not desire to go above and beyond in their duties and are generally suppressed by a factor that acts as a barrier to their full potential. Barely engaged employees do not express a genuine interest in their position and will often do the bare-minimum to satisfy their assigned tasks—sometimes even performing below the standard. Staff at this level are likely to be assessing other job opportunities and are at high-risk for turnover. Disengaged employees exhibit a lack of obligation to their duties, are disconnected from the mission and values of the organization, and have a blatantly poor perception of their employer. These employees have the potential to spread their negative perception of the organization to others, thus impacting the

efficiency and morale of their colleagues. One may be prone to believe that in healthcare, the industry of saving and bettering lives, most employees would fall into the highly engaged and moderately engaged categories—however, the stressors impacting healthcare workers can often diminish the fulfillment of helping others. Poor engagement is not necessarily always the employee’s fault, as in many cases, disengagement is the product of a stressful work environment or apathetic leadership. This is why it is crucial for leaders of healthcare entities to foster a culture that allows employees to love what they do and be empowered to reach their full potential.

3.2 Cost of Turnover

The costs associated with turnover can be immense due to both the direct and indirect expenses that result when an employee leaves an organization. Costs can be attributed to: marketing expenses, time spent during the recruitment and interview process, background check and drug screening fees, and position-specific training. Employee turnover also disrupts the operational efficiency of an organization—thus limiting potential revenue due to decreased productivity. Turnover-induced operational deficiencies are particularly detrimental in healthcare organizations and can negatively impact quality of care or the patient’s experience. As a general rule, the longer a position remains vacant, the more it inherently damages an organization’s bottom line. According to NSI Nursing Solutions (2016), the cost of replacing registered nurses is between \$37,700 and \$58,400. While the cost of RN turnover is staggering enough, Daily Pay (2021) estimated that the average cost of turnover across all healthcare positions is approximately \$60,000 in their most recent healthcare turnover report. Assuming the physician turnover rate continues to climb, this average will undoubtedly get higher since the cost of losing a physician may range

between \$500,000-\$1M depending on the specialty and region in which a provider practices (Berg, 2018).

3.3 Turnover by Position

Leaders across the country have become familiarized with the phenomenon referred to as “The Great Resignation”. The pandemic has caused people within all industries to reevaluate their work-life balance and how they choose to interface with their employers, resulting in approximately 33 million Americans choosing to quit their jobs and pursue other ventures. The healthcare industry has been far from impervious to this event, with an estimated 18% of healthcare workers exiting their positions during the pandemic (Galvin, 2021). While it is to be expected that comparatively lower-wage medical professionals such as patient care technicians (PCTs) and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) have high rates of turnover due to the ability to find equal or better compensation within non-clinical roles outside of the healthcare realm, turnover rates are significant across a variety of positions as exhibited in Figure 1 (Daily Pay, 2021).

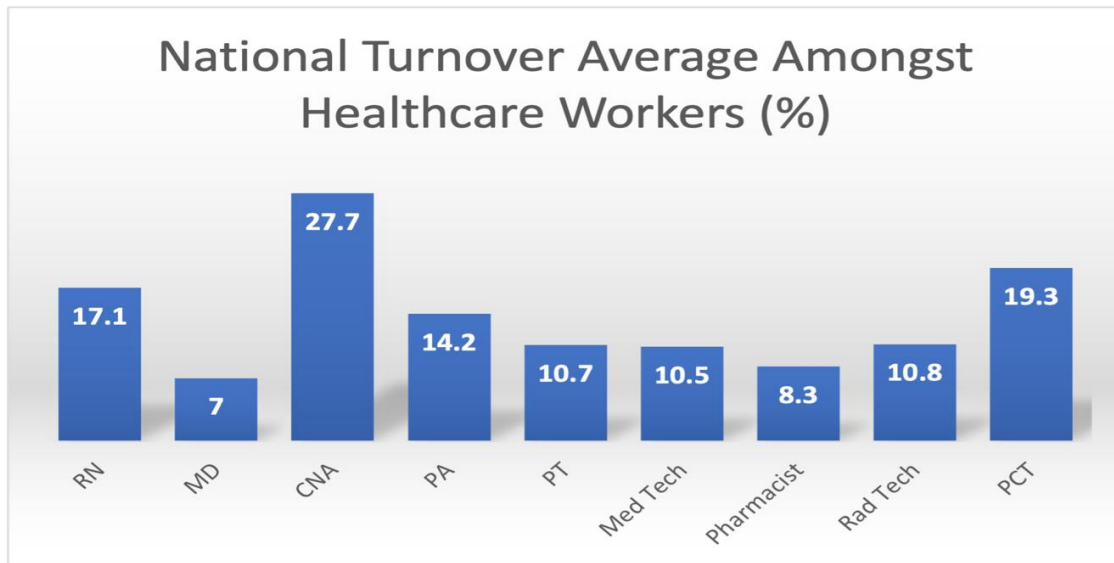


Figure 1. National Turnover Average Amongst Healthcare Workers (%)

The averages depicted above may, of course, vary dramatically between regions and the size or type of healthcare facility in question. For example, hospitals in the South East region of the U.S. (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, & WV) observed an RN turnover of 24.9% in 2019-20—more than 7% higher than the national average. On the contrary, hospitals in the West region (AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, UT, & WA) experienced an RN turnover rate of 15.4% during the same year—nearly 2% less than the national average (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2021). Ultimately, however, turnover has continued to increase each year regardless of region.

4.0 Methods to Increase Retention

With rates of turnover increasing and the burden of responsibility for healthcare workers across the nation becoming significantly heavier, the healthcare industry must develop and implement creative solutions to enhance workplace culture and promote employee engagement. Historically, the patient experience has been the paramount priority for health systems—and while it still is, healthcare executives now understand that facilitating a positive employee experience is essential as well. This change in perception is illustrated by the fact that in 2018, only 21.6% of hospitals had strategies in place that were aimed to retain older nurses—while in 2021 52.6% of hospitals began implementing retention strategies for non-new hires (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2021). A multifaceted approach is necessary to tackle the issues of burnout and poor engagement, thus a variety of solutions will be presented in the following sections that have proven to be effective for health systems striving to retain employees and bring out the best qualities of their workforce.

4.1 Reducing Healthcare Worker Burnout

4.1.1 Exploring Staffing Solutions

One of the largest causes of burnout amongst healthcare workers is the strain they experience due to a culmination of growing work responsibilities resulting from the country's increased reliance on health services and decreased availability of staff due to high turnover and

vacancy rates. Attempting to do more with less is a common theme within the healthcare industry, particularly after the onset of the pandemic—effectively causing healthcare workers to consistently spread themselves thinner. The following section will explore options that healthcare leaders can choose to implement which aim to reduce the prevalence of burnout that results from scarcities in clinical and support staff.

Flexible Staff Deployment

A type of flexible staff deployment, commonly referred to as “floating”, is a cost-effective solution to staffing shortages that allows staff to be shared between a number of different units. Floaters are typically registered nurses or medical assistants who can be reassigned to units depending on patient census and acuities. Although in practice far before the pandemic, floating has become immensely helpful for health systems due to the staffing shortages that are being experienced ubiquitously throughout the country. Many health systems have chosen to increase their number of float nurses as there are several potential advantages to doing so, such as: decreased overtime utilization, decreased need for contract workers, and decreased burnout related to staffing challenges (Straw, 2017).

For some nurses, being a floater can cause feelings of anxiety, stress, and frustration due to the lack of consistency that is inherently present when providing care within a variety of different units—potentially leading to resignation caused by job dissatisfaction (Bitanga, 2018). For this reason, it is essential for the management team to recruit float nurses who appreciate the variability that comes with the position and feel comfortable adapting to new environments. In addition, nursing managers should ensure that float nurses possess the education and training necessary to provide care to the type of patients they come into contact with when working in

various units—otherwise, the quality and safety of care delivered could suffer as a result. (Bitanga, 2018).

Promoting Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility can be described as the level of autonomy that employees have in regard to choosing the duration, tasks, location, and time that they may fulfill the responsibilities of their position (Hill et al., 2008). Promoting workplace flexibility can allow employees to achieve a more favorable balance between the demands of their job and family; for instance, working from home can eliminate the need for child-care services and enhance an employee's family life by permitting them to fulfill their responsibilities remotely. While working from home pre-pandemic was not nearly as widespread, and practically unheard of within the healthcare industry, many health systems have begun to discover that the benefits of allowing healthcare workers to work remotely can be mutually advantageous—effectively decreasing employee burnout while simultaneously enhancing the organization's quality of care and operational efficiency.

Promoting workplace flexibility through the provision of work from home or hybrid options for clinical workers holds the potential to decrease burnout significantly. As demonstrated in a study using survey data of the Boston Hospital Health Workers Study, allowing healthcare workers increased workplace flexibility may help mitigate the negative effects of burnout—especially those who have significant familial demands outside of the workplace (Maglalang et al., 2021). With innovations in technology, notably telemedicine, it has become much easier to promote workplace flexibility amongst positions such as physicians, APPs, and nurses—roles that have been significantly impacted by the pressures resulting from the pandemic. Moving forward, more health systems will begin to offer hybrid options for clinical staff—eventually making this a standard retention strategy.

4.1.2 Invest in Mental Health

The mental health burden placed upon healthcare workers has always been intense, but was undoubtedly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a meta-analysis of surveys administered to frontline employees, a significant portion experienced anxiety (24.94%), depression (24.83%), and sleep disorders (44.03%) during the outbreak (Marvaldi et al., 2021). While the documented prevalence of these issues is staggering enough, it is possible that mental health issues may be underreported due to the associated stigma in addition to fear of repercussion on one's career (Brower, 2021). In addition to the many deleterious effects poor mental health amongst healthcare workers can present in regards to quality and safety of patient care, it is also a major contributor to the prevalence of burnout in frontline workers—making it a critical issue for leaders to confront.

There are a number of approaches healthcare leaders can choose to utilize that may serve to mitigate poor mental health or help those who are suffering. Psychological interventions such as yoga, meditation, and a variety of mindfulness exercises have been studied extensively within the nursing population and have demonstrated the ability to effectively reduce burnout (Aryankhesal et al., 2019). In a randomized control trial conducted over an 8-week period, nurses participated in yoga sessions designed to teach postural alignment, deep breathing exercises, and meditation techniques. The results of this study indicated that nurses who took part in the yoga lessons learned how to better prioritize their self-care and exhibited a reduction in emotional exhaustion and burnout (Alexander et al., 2015). In a post-pandemic setting, it is likely that health systems will begin to implement psychological interventions more widely for their staff as the healthcare industry moves toward valuing the employee experience higher than it has in the past.

A proactive measure that many health systems are beginning to adopt to reduce burnout resulting from emotional distress is the implementation of computer-assisted resilience training. Online programs and internet-based interventions are far easier than activities such as yoga to administer on a large-scale and have demonstrated success in reducing burnout of both physicians and nurses (Aryankhesal et al., 2019). These e-learning modules often include interactive portions, discussion boards, and practical activities intended to provide users with strategies to mitigate stress and engage in activities that are benevolent to their mental and physical health. While resilience training modules have the potential to significantly improve the mental health of healthcare workers, the duration of e-learning has proved to be a determining factor of its usefulness. A 2010 study involving 158 hospital employees showed that courses lasting approximately 2.5 hours were more digestible and efficacious in comparison to shorter or longer training modules (Maunder et al., 2010).

4.2 Increasing Employee Engagement

Investing in staff has the potential to go a long way in regard to increasing employee engagement. Employees who are highly engaged understand the value of their work, demonstrate a steadfast commitment to their organization's mission and values, and will consistently go above and beyond in their duties because they possess an emotional investment in their role. Not only do these employees exhibit a high retention rate, but they serve to keep their colleagues within the organization since teams can sometimes be viewed like family. There are many methods healthcare systems can utilize to invest in their employees, all of which have the potential to reduce turnover and improve organizational performance many times over.

4.2.1 Consistently Recognize Good Performance

Consistently recognizing employees' performance is crucial to both maintaining high engagement levels and raising engagement levels for those who may be only moderately engaged or even disengaged. In addition to driving higher employee engagement, recognizing employees can simultaneously emphasize the values and missions of a healthcare system—thus incentivizing others to strive to be high-performers and enhancing the excellence of an organization. Employee recognition consists of three core components: formal, informal, and day-to-day recognition (Punke, 2013).

Formal recognition is highly structured and rewards individuals, units, departments, or even entire organizations for accomplishing distinct achievements or reaching a predesignated criterion. This tier of recognition is typically administered on a company-wide level or from an established institution. An example of formal recognition is the ANCC Magnet designation, a recognition program that rewards hospitals for meeting criteria set by the American Nurses Credentialing Center that denotes nursing excellence. In addition to improving quality of care and patient outcomes, achieving Magnet status also has been shown to reduce burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover rate (Kutney-Lee et al., 2015). Formal recognition can also occur on a much smaller scale, for example, celebrating an employee's years of service milestone through a gift or celebratory event. Although a seemingly simple gesture, conveying gratitude to an individual for their commitment to an organization can make them feel appreciated while also motivating other employees to devote themselves to the organizational mission as well.

Informal recognition occurs on a smaller level than formal recognition, but is still immensely valuable for reinforcing organizational values and promoting employee engagement. This type of recognition typically occurs on a monthly or quarterly basis and is intended to

recognize employees within a unit or department who have performed exceptionally or achieved a goal that aligns with the organizational mission. An example of informal recognition would be rewarding a patient care technician for going above and beyond for a patient by celebrating their action with a small party within the unit or providing them with a gift card. While much of the healthcare industry's recognition and retention strategies target nurses and physicians, it is also incredibly important to consistently recognize entry-level healthcare workers such as patient care technicians. Although the cost of turnover is significantly less, entry-level positions typically have high turnover rates that can end up being costly and disruptive to operations and the organization's overall morale.

Despite the fact that day-to-day recognition occurs on the smallest scale, it is arguably just as effective as formal and informal recognition due to how frequently it can occur. Day-to-day recognition happens daily or weekly, is either low-cost or free, and can be as intimate as spoken praise or a thank you note (Punke, 2013). This type of praise is especially powerful because it can occur at any time and can be given by both peers and managers. Day-to-day recognition allows for instantaneous reinforcement of organizational values and objectives—or in other words, it allows the recognition of good work in real-time (Harrison, 2005).

In combination, the aforementioned three types of employee recognition serve as incredibly powerful tools for fostering a culture of excellence and promoting employee engagement. Validating the hard work done by healthcare workers allows them to feel valued and encourages them to continue carrying out the mission of providing care to those in need. Although financial incentives are undoubtedly a strong motivator for many, money is a temporary driver of high performance and is not nearly as effective as genuine recognition (Schlechter et al., 2015).

4.2.2 Actively Monitor Employee Engagement and Areas of Improvement

Healthcare leaders have a plethora of metrics and performance indicators that allow them to develop an understanding of organizational needs and areas of improvement, however, the most important resource are the employees themselves. Actively monitoring employee satisfaction and soliciting transparent feedback from healthcare workers is essential if meaningful tactics are to be implemented that can effectively combat turnover.

Engage in Meaningful Rounding

Rounding is an integral part of establishing a culture of accountability and excellence because it allows healthcare leaders to promote their visibility within units by visiting them on a consistent basis—thus encouraging employees to be more highly engaged. This practice also facilitates a channel of two-way communication where frontline staff can personally deliver feedback and suggestions to senior leaders. Providing this opportunity for senior-level leaders and frontline healthcare workers to build rapport and communicate is essential to retaining staff, with one study going as far as to state that an employee’s opinion of their supervisor or leadership team has a greater effect on their retention than their satisfaction with the organization (Ribelin, 2003). While there are different types of rounding, which will be explored further, each type is essential to increasing employee engagement because it provides an opportunity for staff to feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

Paired rounding allows a senior leader to conduct rounds alongside a unit or department’s immediate supervisor. While senior leaders should be meeting regularly with their direct reports to establish rapport and keep abreast with the latest updates, conducting rounds alongside them within their respective units adds an additional layer of transparency that enables senior leaders to gain an enhanced understanding of the areas they oversee. From the staff’s perspective, it is also

beneficial to see senior leadership and their immediate supervisor together as it demonstrates that their manager has a direct relationship with an individual on the executive-level and can advocate on behalf of the frontline.

Job rounding is an immersive approach to conducting rounds that allows leaders to participate in a job duty of another's position in an effort to gain a better understanding of the responsibilities and challenges of frontline staff. This type of rounding may encompass a variety of different positions and can include activities such as helping transporters move patients or assisting dietary with serving food in the cafeteria. Participating in job rounding allows leaders on the executive-level to empathize with frontline workers and make more informed decisions when contemplating initiatives or projects that affect the positions in which they have job rounded. In addition, frontline staff are given a platform to voice their concerns candidly to leaders of the executive team—significantly improving the channel of communication between each party.

Utilize Employee Engagement Surveys

Although rounding may give immensely valuable insight to healthcare leaders, employee engagement surveys (e.g., Press Ganey Healthcare Employee Experience Platform) can be incredibly useful as well. Employee engagement surveys reflect an employee's feelings about their organization, the organizational mission, and their self-reported engagement and satisfaction within their position. These surveys generally preserve each employee's anonymity—effectively facilitating a secure means for staff to share their candid thoughts whether positive or negative. Engagement surveys are typically administered annually, but can be distributed more frequently if necessary. For some engagement surveys, the employee will be presented with statements and choose the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement. Examples of potential statements include, but are not limited to:

- I feel motivated within my current position and have a desire to excel.
- I understand the organizational mission and demonstrate the values often.
- I feel as if my organization cares about me.
- My manager acts upon my unit's feedback regularly.

Surveys also often include open-ended sections where the employee is solicited for feedback regarding areas of improvement or challenges they encounter within their position. While administering employee engagement surveys allows leadership to check the pulse of the frontline and gain insight on the staff's mood and morale, the goal is to convert the survey findings into actionable items that will enhance the employee experience and reduce turnover (Gable et al., 2010). If engagement surveys are not effectively utilized to facilitate improvements within an organization, staff will inevitably view the survey as insignificant.

Provide Career Advancement and Continued Education Opportunities

In order to employ staff who are invested within an organization, it is necessary for leadership to invest in staff as well. Mutual investment is essential to build a foundation of trust and to maximize employee engagement—thus it is important for healthcare organizations to offer staff opportunities for career advancement and continued education.

Although job dissatisfaction and burnout are large contributors to turnover, employees often also leave organizations simply due to lack of growth opportunities. This is common among high-performers who consistently desire to advance within their careers and develop their skills (Fernandez, 2007). Retaining these individuals is dually advantageous for both the employee and the organization, as it allows the organization to place ambitious employees into roles with greater responsibility and impact. Providing career advancement to staff also fosters a sense of loyalty to

the organization and demonstrates that leadership cares about the individual and their professional aspirations.

Continued education opportunities are typically offered within two forms: tuition reimbursement and in-house training programs, both of which have become more commonly found in health systems since the onset of the pandemic. As healthcare entities continue to be plagued by staffing challenges, these organizations have discovered the advantage of offering employees opportunities to continue their education. Many companies now provide tuition reimbursement in exchange for predetermined work commitments to positions that are in high demand such as nurses, radiologic technologists, CRNAs, and respiratory therapists. One study involving the health insurer, Cigna, revealed that for each dollar spent on its tuition reimbursement initiative, it was refunded that dollar and saved an additional \$1.29 as a result of decreased turnover and reduced recruitment expenses (Mulhere, 2016). Tuition reimbursement may come in the form of monthly loan repayments, for example: in exchange for a 3-year work commitment, a health system could offer \$15,000 (\$416/month over the course of 36 months) in repayment to a graduate nurse. Another initiative that numerous health systems are exploring is the concept of in-house training programs. During the pandemic, many training programs ceased to operate and schooling became more difficult for many Americans to afford. This only exacerbated the inability to acquire talent for certain positions, such as surgical technologists, therefore some organizations opted to “grow their own”. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, for example, set out to develop its own surgical technologist training program. This program provided free training to become a surgical technologist to internal employees while allowing them to still retain their wages and employee benefits. The program was incredible for both employees and the organization—as it

helped fulfill the system's surgical technologist vacancies in addition to providing a one-of-a-kind opportunity for internal employees to further their careers significantly.

5.0 Conclusion

Combatting employee turnover continues to be one of the toughest challenges facing health systems throughout the country even as the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic begins to subside. While the healthcare industry prioritizes quality of care and the patient experience, the employee experience has attracted the scrutiny of healthcare executives in the face of staffing shortages which disrupt operational efficiency and revenue potential. Although the future is uncertain, it is inevitable that leaders must persistently implement best-practices aimed towards reducing employee burnout such as developing innovative staff solutions and providing mental health support for the healthcare heroes on the frontline. Promoting workplace flexibility of both clinical and non-clinical employees will be crucial, and it will require progressive-minded individuals to reimagine how care providers interface with patients in a way that is sustainable to their own work-life balance.

Healthcare leaders also must continue to take the necessary steps to foster cultures that reward employees for their steadfast commitment to patients. While every organization has a mission and values, they must be instilled within each initiative pushed forward by executive leadership to ensure that decisions are in the best interest of both the patient and the employee. Although society persistently proclaims its appreciation for healthcare workers, it is essential that healthcare employers express the same level of appreciation by setting up each and every staff member for personal and professional success. Whether through turning feedback into actionable items, providing career advancement opportunities, or simply saying “thank you” in response to a kind action—healthcare employees deserve to feel valued by the health system in which they work. Moving forward, it is vital for leaders to continuously implement best-practices in regard to

enhancing the employee experience if they are to successfully combat turnover. Innovation of novel best-practices will also be crucial if a healthcare system desires to be at the cutting-edge of ingenuity.

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