



How Telehealth Can Fight Healthcare's Great Resignation



Improving job satisfaction, staff retention, and work-life balance during the Great Healthcare Resignation.

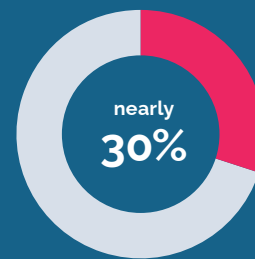
How Telehealth Can Fight Healthcare's Great Resignation

For the last year, employees have been leaving their jobs in record numbers. Few industries have been hit as hard as healthcare. According to several studies, the field has lost an estimated 20% of its workforce, including 30% of its nurses¹.

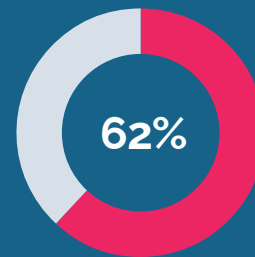
The reasons for quitting are myriad, but a common denominator is burnout, which was already a major concern for healthcare professionals and has now been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



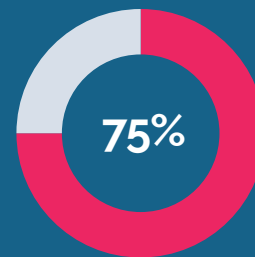
A March 2021 survey of 1,327 frontline healthcare workers (those who come in direct contact with patients) found:



of healthcare workers were considering leaving the field altogether.



reported that worry or stress related to COVID-19 had a negative impact on their mental health².

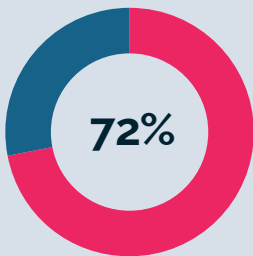


of 18- to 29-year-olds reported that worry or stress related to COVID-19 had a negative impact on their mental health.

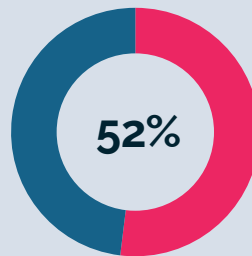
Another factor contributing to the Great Healthcare Resignation, especially in the early days of the pandemic, is vaccine hesitancy. Healthcare workers continue to be concerned about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines, often citing the need for more information. There may also be a lack of institutional trust, especially for Black and Hispanic workers, or anti-vaccine views due to either personal or religious beliefs. With thousands of hospitals mandating that employees be vaccinated, those who refuse are either leaving on their own or being terminated or suspended. Some facilities offer these employees the chance to reapply or return to their positions should they receive the vaccines, but not all³.



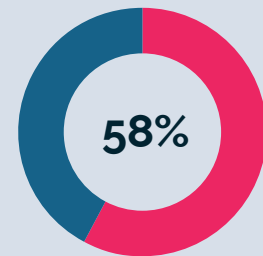
Job satisfaction, or lack thereof, has also contributed to the mass exodus of healthcare workers. In a national benchmarking report of over 11,000 healthcare professionals, using data collected between January 2020 and December 2021:



reported that they were satisfied with their current job⁴. This was a **4% decrease** from the previous benchmark, and the first time there was a decrease in overall job satisfaction.



surveyed reported experiencing a great deal of stress, an **increase of 4%** from the previous benchmark.



of respondents said they are experiencing burnout, with the **highest rate seen** in workers with 6 to 10 years in full-time practice.

With all of these factors taken into consideration, healthcare organizations are tasked with finding ways to recruit and retain employees. Fortunately, telehealth can help solve problems around staffing, workflow, retention, and burnout.

Challenge

The healthcare industry already faced significant shortages prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. One report estimated that the U.S. could face a shortage of 37,800 to 124,000 physicians by 2034⁶. Other roles, such as medical assistants and home health aides, could face shortages into the millions within the next five years⁷.

200,000 to 450,000

estimated deficit of registered nurses available for direct patient care by 2025⁵.



While some healthcare workers are leaving the field entirely, others are finding employment at other facilities or joining staffing agencies to take travel assignments. Workers who have endured extended hours, reduced pay and benefits, and denied PTO may be questioning whether it's worth it to remain in healthcare, especially with COVID rates and hospitalizations rising once again due to the BA.5 subvariant.

Additionally, after almost two and a half years of remote or hybrid work environments, healthcare workers want the option to work from home entirely or go into the office less frequently. Requiring employees to be on-site five days a week can scare away potential candidates. **So how are healthcare organizations going to find the workers they need if the traditional work models are no longer appealing?**



Overview

Telehealth can help alleviate many of the challenges around healthcare recruiting and retention. Healthcare organizations can combine telehealth with AI and automation to fill in the gaps, improve workflow, and reduce provider burnout.



Telehealth can help with staffing shortages by allowing healthcare organizations to recruit providers from anywhere—not just local markets. It also allows providers to achieve a better work-life balance; providers can have a more flexible work schedule, allowing them to spend more time with friends and family. For providers who would normally have to travel long distances to get to work, the lack of a commute gives them more time back in the day. If providers have a better work-life balance, they are more likely to remain in their current position instead of seeking employment elsewhere.

Telehealth also enables providers to see more patients in a day. When combined with a patient engagement solution that allows patients to fill out forms prior to their visit, telehealth relieves some of the administrative burden on providers that often takes up time during a patient encounter.

Reducing Provider Burnout with Telehealth

One of the benefits of telehealth is that it can help reduce provider burnout. When providers are able to work from home or another location outside of the traditional office setting, they can enjoy a better work/life balance. A recent study showed that physicians feel less happy outside of work than they did prior to the pandemic.

Physicians who said they were “very” or “somewhat” happy outside of work⁸.



Physicians who work with COVID-positive patients are often weary after the work day ends, in addition to having peers who do not adhere to safety protocols. Physicians may be frustrated because their exposure to COVID-positive populations or people who do not take safety precautions can put their families at risk. Healthcare workers can reduce their exposure to COVID-19 by working remotely, which can relieve some of the stress around potentially getting a family member sick or getting sick themselves.

When providers leave due to burnout, the employees who remain may be at an even higher risk of getting burned out. Increased workloads due to turnover, combined with an increased patient load, can leave employees feeling stretched thin, especially if the colleagues who left have more experience. This has the added effect of reducing the quality of patient care and can lead to poor health outcomes. Overworked and overtired employees can make mistakes, such as writing the wrong dosage for a medication. Telehealth can provide healthcare employees with additional support and help reduce the potential for human error.

Administrative tasks are a leading cause of burnout for many providers. Telehealth can help automate some of these tasks, such as collecting intake forms, payments, scheduling appointments, and sending reminders. This can free up time for providers so they can focus on patient care.

Increasing the Provider Applicant Pool

One of the benefits of telehealth amid the Great Resignation is that it can widen the applicant pool for healthcare providers. Instead of being limited to employees who are local, telehealth allows healthcare organizations to seek providers in other cities or states. This can be especially beneficial in rural areas that don't have enough providers or specialists to meet their population's needs.

Telehealth also allows rural communities to implement alternative staffing models⁹. For example, advanced practice clinicians and other healthcare workers can practice at the top of their licenses while receiving remote supervision from a physician. Younger providers who do not wish to relocate to a rural area may be more willing to telecommute on a part-time or full-time basis.



Telehealth Helps Improve Workflows

Healthcare employees are under immense pressure to work as quickly as possible, especially as they face increasing patient loads. Healthcare organizations can integrate telehealth into their existing workflows. For example, in an urgent or emergency care setting, telehealth allows providers to quickly access a specialist for a virtual consultation¹⁰. Facilitating easier and faster communication between providers can save precious minutes that can have a significant impact on the patient's care and outcomes.

Telehealth can also be used post-discharge to ensure adherence to treatment plans. Patients are more likely to be receptive if they are able to have appointments in the comfort of their own homes. During the appointment, the provider can reinforce the plan and answer any questions the patient might have. They can also bring in additional members of the care team if extra support is needed.

Conclusion

Telehealth can be a powerful ally when it comes to solving healthcare's staffing problems. With employees wanting more flexibility and greater work-life balance, healthcare organizations can benefit from offering a hybrid or remote environment to attract candidates. When combined with AI and automation, tasks that once took up a significant amount of time can be completed faster, enabling staff to spend more time on patient care.



1

The Great Resignation's Toll on Healthcare - Healthleadersmedia.com

2

KFF/The Washington Post Frontline Health Care Workers - The Washington Post/KFF Survey Project

3

How many employees have hospitals lost to vaccine mandates? - Fierce Healthcare

4

Burnout benchmark: 28% unhappy with current health care job - American Medical Association

5

Assessing the lingering impact of COVID-19 on the nursing workforce - McKinsey & Company

6

The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections From 2019 to 2034 - Association of American Medical Colleges

7

US healthcare Labor Market - Mercer

8

Medscape Physician Lifestyle & Happiness Report 2022 - Medscape

9

Telehealth Models for Promoting Workforce Recruitment and Retention - Rural Health Information Hub

10

Telehealth: Enhancing Workflows and Optimizing Care - Beckers Hospital Review