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Press release

Strategy to Counter Staff Shortage Among Health Professions

Under the lead of the Bern University of Applied Sciences, the health sciences faculties of five universities of applied sciences have collected comprehensive data on the shortage of health professions. The assessment provides indications of what is needed to reduce the future rate of withdrawal from the sector and to improve the situation of health professionals: better working conditions, innovative training and continuing education, new models of care and organizational structures.

Early retirement, a shortage of new recruits, and remaining staff under tremendous pressure: The shortage of qualified health professionals in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and outpatient healthcare providers represents one of the biggest challenges for high-quality healthcare in Switzerland. Just over four years ago, under the leadership of the Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH), the health sciences faculties of five applied sciences universities¹ initiated the project "Strategy to Counter Staff Shortage Among Health Professions". In 15 research projects, they have focused on various topics relating to staff shortages in the health professions, for example stress factors in the workplace, interprofessional collaboration, personnel retention measures in the sector, new care models, and also informal caregivers.

Strategies for solutions with qualified, healthy health professionals in the healthcare sector

The extensive results of the project were broken down into three solution strategies. The aim is to alleviate future shortages of qualified health professionals and to ensure high-quality healthcare in Switzerland with qualified, healthy health professionals:

1. Promoting the retention of health professionals in the profession and supporting informal caregivers

The studies show that 87% of care providers want higher remuneration, 72% want a better work-life balance, 57% want more support from their supervisors, and 63% want reduced time pressure on the job. The lack of work-life balance is endangering the health of a number of groups of employees. Specifically, it engenders burnout symptoms and has a massive impact on sleep quality. Moral dilemmas, such as the performance of work activities that do not meet the employees' own personal needs have also been identified and increase the likelihood of employees' deciding to leave the profession. Therefore, healthcare enterprises need to make improvements in the operational framework and working conditions a high priority, to promote the well-being of health professionals and reduce the exit rate of employees from the sector.

Informal caregivers must also be supported with low-threshold access to services: for example, services that help them assess what support and care their relatives need.

¹ HES-SO (Applied Sciences School in Western Switzerland), SUSPI (University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Southern Switzerland), OST (Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences), ZHAW (Zurich University for Applied Sciences)
www.cnhw.ch



2. Development of innovative education and ongoing training

Staff shortages or digitalization place increased demands on health professionals and informal caregivers. Skills in using digital media as well as aids for support, therapy and personal care must be promoted, for example, the use of apps for communication between patients and informal caregivers. In addition, health professionals and informal caregivers need good strategies to manage their everyday work in a healthy way. Targeted training and continuing education programs should remediate this situation.

3. New organizational structures and support

Social change, increasing complexity in care and therapy, and drivers such as technological progress require new organizational and support structures as well as care models. These must be assessed for their added value. New solutions could include, for example, the establishment of drop-in centers and care units run by nurses, midwives, physiotherapists with appropriate qualifications, for example in advanced practice roles.

The Network bundles competencies and ensures the implementation of measures

In parallel to their research activities, these universities of applied sciences have established the Competence Network Health Workforce (CNHW). This network aims to implement measures for the retention of personnel in close collaboration with healthcare organizations as well as with informal caregivers. In addition, the network will develop available training and continuing education as well as consulting services. After the project is completed in the summer of 2021, the network will be provided with ongoing funding for these services from the participating universities of applied sciences.

On June 15, 2021, the closing event for the project will take place in a hybrid format, adapted for COVID-19 measures. The major outcomes of the program will be presented at the event. As a media professional, you are invited to attend.

A summary of the project results is currently available in English at www.cnhw.ch. In the third quarter, German, French and Italian versions will be available.

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