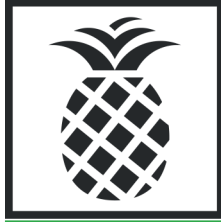


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Motivations for Joining the Healthcare Field

Elise Hernandez

INTRODUCTION

The motivations behind joining the healthcare industry are important to understand as the industry has been exponentially changing in recent years. Many fields have witnessed shifts in motivations from intrinsic compassion to extrinsic motivations like financial stability (Terzi et al., 2022). While many agree that compassion is still a dominant healthcare career drive, it is imperative for those considering these careers to be aware of the other factors that are evolving within the industry. I am an eleventh-grade student considering pursuing a healthcare career. Both of my parents have worked in healthcare for the span of their careers, so I have been exposed to this field of work and have grown interested in it. For many years, I believed I would become a doctor in the future. However, like many others my age, I needed clarity to choose my future career. Therefore, I embarked on a journey to understand what motivates people to join the healthcare field and how the field has been changing. To accomplish this goal, I interviewed five healthcare professionals for insight into their work life and I investigated published work on changes within healthcare. This excerpt summarizes my discoveries regarding healthcare career motivations and the factors that have impacted them, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Professions in healthcare are ever-changing and it is important to understand these changes as new generations start to join this workforce.

INDIVIDUAL PATHS IN HEALTHCARE

The journey to a healthcare career is seldom linear. Within each white coat or uniform lies a unique story of discovery and determination. Healthcare professionals often embark on diverse paths before finding their true calling. These pathways contribute to an increased understanding of the field and a more holistic approach to patient care. For instance, a respiratory therapist found his field after entering college to study pharmacy. The demands of the pharmacy program did not allow for time to maintain a football scholarship. Therefore, he could remain in healthcare as he found a passion for respiratory therapy despite losing his original pursuit. Similarly, a psychologist with a previous teaching and special education degree felt inspired to begin evaluation and diagnostic work as a psychologist. Many people take these stepping stones before reaching their final fit of a profession, and every individual has their own journey.

In nursing, motivations to enter the field have evolved. Traditionally driven by intrinsic values of compassion and nobility, nurses now often find themselves drawn to extrinsic factors such as financial stability and job security (Avraham et al., 2023). This shift reflects the changing dynamics of the healthcare landscape, where practical considerations have started to complement the altruistic spirit that has historically defined nursing (Avraham et al., 2023). A registered nurse who found her passion for nursing early in her life shared that becoming a nurse requires a lot of "dedication, compassion,

and patience, but it will be the most rewarding decision one can make."

Additionally, medical students' main motivating factors include helping others and being interested in the medical field (Gąsiorowski et al., 2015). An emergency medicine physician expressed that she was drawn to the field. She explained that emergency medicine physicians are "in the frontlines, so a part of that has driven some people in a way, but overall, it is still an amazing field that people get drawn to."

CHALLENGES TO MEET THE GROWING DEMAND

The global upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has left a lasting mark on the healthcare profession. The pandemic affected various healthcare sectors, including human resource management, facility utilization, and medical supply management (Haileamlak, 2021). Working in the profession requires grueling dedication and passion for the job, so it is compelling to see all the factors that draw people to such a difficult field. For healthcare workers, there have been higher signs of burnout, psychological stress, and suicide (Gupta et al., 2021). There has also been a nationwide shortage of nurses that severely affects all aspects of the job (Avraham et al., 2023). The World Health Organization has identified adverse mental impacts on individuals due to the pandemic, including stress, anxiety, and depression (Pollock et al., 2020). As healthcare professionals are becoming overworked, there is a new call for healthier working hours and stress management.

Incentives have emerged as strategies to address the shortage of healthcare workers. Hospitals that offered incentives to healthcare workers found higher productivity levels and full patient attendance (Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021). In nursing, monetary and non-monetary added benefits in recent years are expected to bring the full-time equivalent registered nurse population from

3.35 million in 2018 to 4.54 million in 2030 (Flaubert et al., 2021).

The demand for healthcare professionals remains high because of an increasingly aging population with chronic diseases and complex care needs (Persson et al., 2022). The World Health Organization highlighted the importance of these workers, saying they are "the most valuable resource for health" (Joseph & Joseph, 2016, p. 71). Despite the challenges and risks of their profession, healthcare workers remain drawn to their vocation, recognizing the profound impact they can make.

CONCLUSION

In a world marked by change, healthcare professionals continue to be the bedrock of compassion, care, and inspiration to those considering a path in healthcare. It is concerning to imagine the state of well-being worldwide without the tireless efforts of healthcare professionals. These vital figures in society sparked a curiosity within me about the process of joining and working in their field. Therefore, I wanted to learn what motivates individuals to become healthcare professionals in today's world.

As the world continues to evolve, so do the motivations that draw individuals to healthcare professions. This willingness to evolve while maintaining a commitment to their calling characterizes many people in the healthcare field. Beneath the white coats and scrubs lies a complex web of aspirations shaped by personal values, societal shifts, and the desire to serve. Passion remains a driving force behind healthcare professionals' ability to adapt. It fuels healthcare professionals' dedication to patient well-being and inspires them to provide the highest quality care. The multifaceted motivations of healthcare workers underline their profound commitment to their noble cause.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The author reports no conflicts of interest. The author alone is responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

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