



WORK-RELATED WELLBEING

What good looks like for healthcare workers

Factors which protect workers' wellbeing are important to consider when developing mentally healthy work. Too many New Zealanders suffer ill-health as a result of work.

WorkSafe New Zealand has carried out research to understand what work-related factors are perceived to contribute most to the wellbeing of New Zealand workers across different industry and worker groups. WorkSafe has developed this information to guide businesses in the design of initiatives to support mentally healthy work, and demonstrate the benefits of this for workers, businesses, whānau, and the wider community.

The findings from this research reflect the views of those participants who were invited and opted to participate in the study. This advice is a starting point.

A more detailed summary of the research approach and general findings can be found [here](#).

Healthcare workers included in the research represented a range of roles including nurses, hospital administration staff, pharmacists, practice managers, clinical dieticians, medical modellers, radiographers, and psychologists. Roles ranged from low skilled workers to mid-level management, with a large proportion being highly skilled with tertiary qualifications. The following section highlights things an organisation can change in their immediate environment.

There are also relevant factors impacting work-related wellbeing which may be outside the organisation's direct control.

Protective factors of work-related wellbeing for healthcare workers

Interpersonal relationships

- Workers appreciate having a culture in the workplace that promotes supportive and positive interactions with co-workers, patients, and managers. Close-knit and supportive interpersonal relationships within teams and a sense of camaraderie, shared purpose, and values promote healthcare workers' work-related wellbeing.

"I like the teamwork side of things. You do help one another out and have jokes and that kind of thing. There's all that collegial aspect to it. I enjoy working with people, both patients and colleagues. I also enjoy the challenges and that collegial communication, and that's why I've stuck doing it."

- When workers feel trusted to perform the jobs they are trained in, this helps workers to feel trusted and valued, and has positive impacts on their work-related wellbeing.
- Healthcare workers appreciate working with managers who are transparent, supportive, and check-in on their wellbeing.
- The diversity of teams in ethnicity, culture, and age was identified as a protective factor.

Recognition and reward

- Knowing their work is positively impacting on the community and making a difference to peoples' lives is important.
- Healthcare workers have a strong sense of obligation and care for their patients.

“At the end of the day, you feel like you’re actually doing something good. We’ve all got to have a job and earn money, but better if you feel your job is worthwhile, for the greater good.”

“I often get into conversations with people about their health and things they need to watch out for. I guess having that respect from people I guess for what I do makes me feel good.”

- Healthcare workers find it important to be recognised financially (such as appropriate levels of pay for work performed) and non-financially (receiving praise). This helps workers to feel appreciated and valued for the work they do.

Work-life balance

- When workers have a good work-life balance, this helps them to feel satisfied in their jobs and enjoy all aspects of their lives outside work. Healthcare workers appreciate having a good work-life balance and a workplace that allows for and supports workers to manage this.

Career development

- Healthcare workers enjoy the rewarding, stimulating, and challenging nature of their work, and constant opportunities to develop skills and problem solve.

“I love the acute stuff... you really have to think about what you’re doing and it’s an emergency and it’s life or death, I just love that. That’s why I do my job.”

- Bringing new skills back into the workplace makes staff feel valued. Healthcare workers value a workplace which supports their ongoing development, and makes time available for formal professional development opportunities.

“I love my job. I feel that I’m an expert at what I do. I feel really knowledgeable, but I’m still learning all the time.”

Physical work environment and equipment

- It is important to healthcare workers to have well-maintained and up-to-date equipment. This supports efficiency in their jobs and feeling safe and healthy.
- Healthcare workers appreciate access to affordable parking and good quality food in close proximity, and adequate time to take meal and bathroom breaks. Having access to these facilities and time to use them helps to support workers' wellbeing.