



## Opinions of the Nursing Staff Employed in Selected Medical Facilities in Lodz about the Healthcare System in Poland and the Functioning of Nurses in This System

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The functioning of the healthcare system in Poland is perceived negatively by both patients and healthcare professionals. What is particularly worrying, the changes implemented by the legislator, aimed at improving the functioning of medical facilities are also perceived by medical staff as unsatisfactory.

**Objective:** The main objective of the paper was to learn about opinions of the nursing staff employed in selected medical facilities in Lodz about the healthcare system in Poland and the functioning of nurses in this system

**Material and methods:** The survey was conducted from March to September 2019 in two selected medical facilities providing hospitalisation services in Lodz. When collecting empirical material, the author's own questionnaire containing 22 questions was used. 188 respondents filled in the surveys.

**Results:** The vast majority of the total number of respondents (188 people), i.e. 81.4% of respondents (153 people) assessed the functioning of the healthcare system in Poland definitely bad or rather bad. Among all respondents, the vast majority, i.e. 79.3% (149 people), were not satisfied with the changes taking place in the healthcare system regarding nursing staff.

**Conclusions:** Immediate measures should be taken to improve the opinion of nursing staff on the functioning of the healthcare system in Poland. Bad opinion on the functioning of the healthcare system may lead to a decrease in the level of job satisfaction and, consequently, to a decrease in the quality of medical services offered to patients.

**Key words:** nurse, medical staff, health care system, job satisfaction.

## Introduction

The healthcare system in Poland struggles with a number of challenges and issues which are generated by many independent factors. Undoubtedly, one of the main factors directly shaping healthcare in our country is the level of financing of the system. Unfortunately, expenditure on healthcare in Poland is lower than in most European countries. According to the data in the Health at a Glance report: Europe 2018 of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, our country in 2017 spent 2,773 Euro per year on healthcare per capita. In the discussed comparison, Switzerland (5,799 Euro) and Norway (4,653 Euro) are among the countries spending the most on healthcare, while in further positions are the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, Austria, Denmark and Belgium. Poland took the infamous fifth place from the end – ahead of Croatia, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania [1].

Another challenge that undoubtedly puts a strain on the healthcare system is the ageing of Polish society. According to the reports prepared by the Central Statistical Office, the share of older people, i.e. over 65 in our society will double by 2030 and reach over 23%. The problem of the ageing population is undoubtedly a phenomenon that requires special attention, because it directly burdens the state finances, with particular regard to the sphere of expenditure on hospital management. The current system is not adapted to the growing medical needs of people aged 65 and over. This entails the problem of poverty among the elderly, which leads to saving on medicines, which in turn increases the costs of subsequent hospital treatment [2].

This situation is an additional burden for medical staff, including nurses, which in turn translates to a worse perception of the entire healthcare system and the functioning of individual professional groups in it.

The functioning of the healthcare system in Poland is perceived negatively by both patients and healthcare professionals. According to the research carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS), currently less than every fourth respondent (23%) is satisfied with the

functioning and positively assesses the healthcare system in our country. From the patient's point of view, the worst assessed element of the healthcare system in Poland is the availability of visits to specialists (only 8% of positive assessments) [3]. Similarly, negative opinions about the functioning of healthcare are expressed by medical workers. What is particularly worrying, the changes implemented by the legislator, aimed at improving the functioning of medical facilities are also perceived by medical staff as unsatisfactory [4].

The perception and assessment of the functioning of the healthcare system translates into a level of satisfaction with the work of medical staff. On the other hand, job satisfaction of medical professionals is an important element in the healthcare system because it has a direct impact on the quality and safety of patient care. In addition, it was observed that low satisfaction with the work of nurses increases the risk of them leaving their professional work and changing their profession [5,6].

Research also indicates more advanced relationships between the satisfaction of nurses and such factors as: delegating tasks at work, mental support, as well as identification with the workplace [7,8,9,10,11,12]. There were also significant correlations between the organization's culture and the level of satisfaction with the work of medical staff. Work organisation and employee-oriented internal marketing have a positive impact on the level of satisfaction with the work of nurses [13].

### **Objective**

The main objective of the paper was to learn about opinions of the nursing staff employed in selected medical facilities in Lodz about the healthcare system in Poland and the functioning of nurses in this system. The purpose of the study was also to find out the differences in the opinions of nursing staff of different ages on selected elements of the healthcare system.

### **Material and methods**

The survey was conducted from March to September 2019 in two selected medical facilities providing hospitalisation services in Lodz.

When collecting empirical material, the author's own questionnaire was used, containing 22 questions, including 16 substantive questions and 6 metric questions. The questionnaire was intended for self-completion by respondents. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. 188 respondents submitted the surveys. The data contained in the surveys were entered in the MS Excel spreadsheet. In order to develop the collected empirical material, descriptive methods and methods of statistical inference were used. For the description of the whole group of examined and subgroups distinguished on the basis of qualitative features, structure indicators were calculated, which were expressed as a percentage [%]. To compare the incidence of particular categories of quantitative features in the analysed groups, the chi-square independence test or chi-square independence test with Yates's coefficient was used. The results for which the values of the statistics obtained in the conducted tests belonged to the critical area of the relevant distribution at the significance level  $p=0.05$  were considered significant.

### **Results**

In the group of 188 respondents, almost all respondents, i.e. 186 people (98.9%) were women (Table 1).

Among the total number of respondents, the most numerous group, i.e. 42.6% (80 people) were respondents aged 50 and over. Nursing staff under the age of 40 constituted 30.3% of respondents (57 people) (Table 1).

Among all respondents, almost every fifth respondent (19.7%, 37 people) declared having a master's degree. 30.3% of respondents (57 people) declared completion of additional qualification courses, while 26.1% (49 people) of respondents had a specialisation (Table 1).

The most numerous group among all respondents, i.e. 39.9% (75 people) were people with a seniority of nursing over 25 years (Table 1).

Among all respondents (188 people), the vast majority, i.e. 81.4% (153 people) assessed the functioning of the healthcare system in Poland definitely bad or rather bad (Table 2).

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Woman	186	98.9
Man	2	1.1
Total	188	100.0
<b>Age</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
18-29	12	6.4
30-39	45	23.9
40-49	51	27.1
50-59	60	31.9
60 years and more	20	10.7
Total	188	100.0
<b>Education (multiple choice question)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Nursing High School	41	21.8
Bachelor's degree studies	44	23.4
Master's degree studies	37	19.7
Additional qualification courses	57	30.3
Specialisations	49	26.1
<b>Seniority</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Up to 5 years	8	4.2
6-10 years	4	2.1
11-15 years	15	8.0
16-20 years	37	19.7
21-25 years	49	26.1
Over 25 years	75	39.9
Total	188	100.0

In the group of respondents up to 39 years old, the percentage of people assessing the functioning of the healthcare system as definitely bad was higher than in the group of nurses aged 40 or more, however, the observed differences in the assessment of the healthcare system functioning by age turned out to be statistically insignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

People who assessed the functioning of the healthcare system in Poland as bad (153 people) were asked to indicate the main reasons for the malfunctioning of the system. The most numerous group, i.e. 28.1% (43 people) were nurses, who indicated the low remuneration of the

staff as the main reason. The second most frequently indicated reason for the system malfunctioning were staff shortages – this was the answer given by 24.8% of respondents (38 people) (Table 2).

Table 2. Opinions of respondents about the healthcare system in Poland

Healthcare system functioning evaluation	N	%
Definitely bad	60	31.9
Rather bad	93	49.5
Rather good	19	10.1
Definitely good	0	0.0
No opinion	16	8.5
Total	188	100.0
Main reasons for the system malfunctioning	N	%
Low staff remuneration	43	28.1
Staff shortage	38	24.8
Poor working conditions	22	14.5
Bearing the costs of self-education	21	13.7
Unclear legal regulations	14	9.1
Poor preparation for the job	6	3.9
Other	9	5.9
Total	153	100.0
Satisfaction with changes in the healthcare system regarding nursing staff	N	%
Definitely unsatisfying	47	25.0
Rather unsatisfying	102	54.3
Rather satisfying	20	10.6
Definitely satisfying	0	0.0
No opinion	19	10.1
Total	188	100.0
Opinions about personnel shortage in the healthcare system	N	%
Definitely not occurring	9	4.8
Rather not occurring	44	23.4
Rather occurring	86	45.7
Definitely occurring	27	14.4
No opinion	22	11.7
Total	188	100.0

Table 3. Evaluation of healthcare system functioning by respondents by age

Healthcare system functioning evaluation	Age of respondents											
	18-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60 years and more		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Definitely bad	7	58.3	20	44.4	14	27.5	13	21.7	6	30	6	30
Rather bad	2	16.7	16	35.6	29	56.9	38	63.3	8	40	8	40
Rather good	3	25	6	13.3	2	3.9	5	8.3	3	15	3	15
Definitely good	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
No opinion	0	0	3	6.7	6	11.8	4	6.7	3	15	3	15
Total	12	100	45	100	51	100	60	100	20	100	20	100

Chi<sup>2</sup>=23,536; p>0,05

Table 4. Satisfaction with changes in the healthcare system regarding nursing staff by age

Satisfaction with changes in the healthcare system regarding nursing staff	Age of respondents											
	18-29 years		30-39 years		40-49 years		50-59 years		60 years and more		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Definitely unsatisfying	4	33.4	18	40.0	14	27.5	9	15.0	2	10.0	2	10.0
Rather unsatisfying	3	25.0	25	55.6	26	51.0	41	68.3	7	35.0	7	35.0
Rather satisfying	4	33.3	2	4.4	4	7.8	7	11.7	3	15.0	3	15.0
Definitely satisfying	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
No opinion	1	8.3	0	0.0	7	13.7	3	5.0	8	40.0	8	40.0
Total	12	100	45	100	51	100	60	100	20	100	20	100

Chi<sup>2</sup>=43.51; p>0.01



Among all respondents, the vast majority, i.e. 79.3% (149 people), were not satisfied with the changes taking place in the healthcare system regarding nursing staff (table 2). The highest percentage (95.6%) of people who were not satisfied with the changes in the healthcare system regarding nursing staff was observed among nurses aged 30-39. The differences in the assessment of satisfaction with changes in the health care system regarding nursing staff by age turned out to be statistically significant –  $p < 0.001$  (Table 4).

Among all respondents (188 people), the largest group, i.e. 45.7% (86 people) were respondents who claimed that staff shortages rather occur in the health care system in Poland, while 14.4% of respondents said that the mentioned shortage definitely occurs (Table 2).

The vast majority, i.e. 80.0% (152 people) of nurses surveyed said that they were rather interested in the changes taking place in the health care system in Poland. Lack of interest was declared by 3.3% of respondents (6 people) (Table 5).

The respondents most often mentioned the Internet as the main source of information on changes in the healthcare system – this was the answer given by 30.9% of respondents (58 people) (Table 5).

In the group of all respondents (188 people), the vast majority of respondents, i.e. 72.9% (137 people) were dissatisfied with the amount of remuneration received (Table 6).

Satisfaction with the received remuneration was higher among older respondents. Among the respondents aged 50 and over (80 people), the percentage of satisfied with the remuneration was 47.5% (38 people), while among younger respondents the percentage of satisfied with the received salary was 4.6% (5 people). The differences turned out to be statistically significant –  $p > 0.0001$  (Table 7).

When asked about the level of satisfaction with the nursing staff education system, the majority (52.7%, i.e. 99 people) answered that they were not satisfied with the nursing staff education process. A significant proportion of respondents, i.e. 22.3% (42 people) had no opinion on the system of nurse education in Poland (Table 6).

Table 5. Respondents' interest in changes in healthcare

<b>Respondents' interest in changes in healthcare system</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
I am definitely not interested	2	1.1
I am rather not interested	4	2.1
I am rather interested	152	80.8
I am definitely interested	24	12.8
No opinion	6	3.2
Total	188	100.0
<b>Respondents' main sources of obtaining information about changes in the healthcare system</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Workplace	47	25.0
Press, radio, TV	54	28.7
Internet	58	30.9
Family, friends	29	15.4
Total	188	100.0

Table 6. Respondents' satisfaction with selected elements of work as a nurse

<b>Respondents' satisfaction with remuneration</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Definitely unsatisfied	62	33.0
Rather unsatisfied	75	39.9
Rather satisfied	36	19.1
Definitely satisfied	2	1.1
No opinion	13	6.9
Total	188	100.0
<b>Respondents' satisfaction with education system for nursing staff</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Definitely unsatisfied	39	20.8
Rather unsatisfied	60	31.9
Rather satisfied	45	23.9
Definitely satisfied	2	1.1
No opinion	42	22.3
Total	188	100.0

Table 7. Evaluation of respondents' satisfaction with remuneration by age

Respondents' satisfaction with remuneration	Age of respondents											
	18-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60 years and more			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Definitely satisfied	5	41.7	26	57.8	15	29.4	15	25.0	1	5		
Rather unsatisfied	2	16.7	17	37.8	30	58.8	23	38.3	3	15		
Rather satisfied	2	16.7	0	0.0	3	5.9	20	33.3	11	55		
Definitely satisfied	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	10		
No opinion	3	25	2	4.4	3	5.9	2	3.3	3	15		
Total	12	100	45	100	51	100	60	100	20	100		

Chi<sup>2</sup>= 83,193; p<0,0001

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## Discussion

Nursing staff opinions on the functioning of the healthcare system in Poland were mostly negative. Nurses' main reason for dissatisfaction is too low remuneration. What is particularly worrying, respondents were also not satisfied with the changes taking place in the healthcare system in recent years. Lack of satisfaction with the introduced changes was significantly higher among younger nurses. The observed dependencies are extremely worrying because a bad assessment of the functioning of the health care system and dissatisfaction with the received remuneration are significant risk factors for low job satisfaction, which in turn can affect the quality of medical care and patient safety. As shown by studies conducted by other authors, a high level of satisfaction of nurses from work correlates with a higher quality of services provided, especially in the assessment of patients. On the other hand, low job satisfaction reduces the safety and satisfaction of patients with medical care [14,15]. Scientific evidence also indicates that higher levels of occupational burnout among nurses due to work stress are associated with lower levels of job satisfaction [16]. It has also been observed that nurses with a high level of job satisfaction are more effective in providing high quality medical care because they more often take patient satisfaction as the main goal of care [17]. The presented situation indicates the need to take immediate action to increase the satisfaction of nurses with their work. As the research results and experience of other countries show that internal organisational solutions, such as ensuring the possibility of personal development, introduction of clear management methods, division of responsibilities and scopes of responsibilities have a positive impact on job satisfaction and can be a counterweight to negative factors that can be modified only at the central level [18].

Another problem that the Polish healthcare system is facing is staff shortages, which was also observed by the nurses participating in this study. Half of the respondents declared that they meet at work with a shortage of staff. In addition, we are observing a regular increase in the

average age of nurses in Poland. Currently, the average age has exceeded 52 years, which clearly indicates the lack of replacement of generations in this professional group. Failure to take action to make the nursing profession more attractive may lead to radical staff shortages and limit the possibility of providing adequate care to patients. Implementation of solutions aimed at counteracting these adverse trends should be undertaken already at the stage of nursing studies. It is true that the process of educating nurses in Poland in the recent years has positively evolved. We observe the expansion of the scope of competence of nurses by the legislator, which aims to increase autonomy of this professional group among medical professions [19]. However, despite the above arguments, most of the respondents participating in this study were dissatisfied with the processes of training nursing staff in our country.

## Conclusions

1. Immediate measures should be taken to improve the opinion of nursing staff on the functioning of the healthcare system in Poland. Bad opinion on the functioning of the healthcare system may lead to a decrease in the level of job satisfaction and, consequently, to a decrease in the quality of medical services offered to patients.
2. The low satisfaction with remuneration, observed among the majority of respondents, suggests that actions taken in the first place in this area may significantly contribute to a better assessment of the health care system functioning and the increase of satisfaction with the work of nursing staff.
3. Over half of the respondents poorly assessed the nursing staff education system, which suggests the need to take actions to improve this process by adapting it to the real needs of this group of medical personnel.
4. There is a need to conduct further, systematic research monitoring the opinions of nursing staff about the healthcare system and the functioning of nurses in this system in order to take appropriate actions to increase job satisfaction of this professional group.

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