

Overview CHARE GD-II sub project 6

Title: TowWork – Tomorrow's vital workforce in the cross-border region: how to deal with the shortage of nurses in hospitals?

Scientific project leaders:

German side	Dutch side
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Project description:

The shortage of nurses is a main challenge for many hospitals with potentially dire consequences for patient care. Increasing patient volumes and competition between hospitals in recruiting and retaining qualified nurses is exacerbating the problem. In addition, high levels of physical and psychosocial exposures at work result in severe health issues and lead in turn to high turnover and sick leave rates. Therefore, hospitals need to invest in healthy workplaces that contribute to sustained employment of nurses throughout their career. Technology might offer solutions to support nurses in their daily work by e.g. smart scheduling, health promotion apps or technological assistance systems. However, it is unclear whether the nursing staff or the hospital management show sufficient readiness for implementing these technologies.

Preliminary work showed that the shortage of nurses poses a greater challenge to hospitals in the Northern German-Dutch border region, which is also less densely populated and economically weaker than urban border regions. Learning from hospitals' strategies for dealing with nurse shortages and turnover - particularly from the other side of the border - may help to develop adequate strategies to improve nurse recruitment and retention within our cross-border region.

The project aims to:

- (1) Systematically compare the staff situation in hospitals in the Northern German-Dutch border region,
- (2) Identify similarities, differences and best-practices in recruitment and retention strategies of nurses in the cross-border region, and
- (3) Identify and quantify needs, preferences and levels of acceptance of nurses and hospital management in regard to technological solutions in times of nursing shortage.

The three objectives will be reached by combining three data collection methods:

- (1) Data on hospital characteristics and staff situation will be retrieved or collected by standardized telephone interviews with the hospital management (n=50),

(2) Semi-structured qualitative interviews with decision-makers in the hospital management (n=12) and with hospital nurses from both sides of the border will be conducted (n=12), and

(3) Nurses in the hospitals included will be surveyed with an online survey (n=2500). To explore cultural and societal differences towards technology use between the two countries a subsample of nurses from both sides of the border (n=40) will also visit 'living labs' at the University of Oldenburg and OFFIS - Institute for Information Technology. Within these 'living labs' examples of technological healthcare solutions will be demonstrated and the nurses will be surveyed afterwards to observe changes in opinion after having been able to see and try possible technologies.