

# Executive Summary Part Two

## Part Two: Concurrent Session at CCHL National Conference

Co-facilitated by Steve Kovacic and Brenda Lammi

### Panelist Dialogue

#### Engaging and Supporting the Health Workforce

Mike Nader, President and CEO of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, highlighted the importance of engagement and support to achieve retention. During the pandemic, the absence of visible executive leadership was a significant issue. To address this, efforts were made to improve visibility and engagement through various initiatives, such as distributing ice cream, holding open office hours, organizing “Ask Me Anything” (AMA) sessions, and conducting daily huddles to address staff issues in real-time. Despite these efforts, challenges like high work-safe injury rates and the loss of many mid-level leaders persisted, underscoring the need to focus on and support mid-level leaders.

Kathy MacNeil from the Vancouver Island Health Authority shared that a strategic team was established at her organization to address workforce challenges, focusing on training and development, good leadership, flexibility, childcare, and housing impacts. The development of a new leader program and peer recognition initiatives were key steps. Safety was prioritized, with a concerted effort to promote cultural safety and address workplace risks, and regularly discussed in town halls.

Kelly Kimens shared that at the William Osler Health System, staff feedback was actively sought and addressed, using engagement surveys, exit interviews, new hire surveys. In addition, feedback and solutions are sought through an organizational wide Shaping Our Culture network. This network supports reviewing survey results and is an important part of action plan development, communication, and championing of initiatives. The engagement and wellness strategy, built on the concept of “I, we, and you,” emphasizes personal, collective, and organizational actions, fostering shared ownership and accountability.

#### Impact of Efforts to Retain the Health Workforce

Kimens mentioned using data from focus areas and walkabouts (informal and formal leader visits to clinical and non clinical areas to discuss safety issues as well as promoting operational and cultural outcomes) to assess whether engagement and support strategies are effective, sharing this data with employees. MacNeil emphasized the importance of effective communication, using employee and pulse surveys and conducting walkabouts to gather feedback. Nader reported using pulse surveys and quick access surveys, encouraging leadership to shadow workers and receive direct feedback. An email account for direct communication with the CEO also helped gauge employee sentiment.

## Gen Z in the Workforce

William Osler Health System shifted focus from only traditional training to experiential learning, providing mentorship and hands-on development, aligning with Gen Z's preference for direct experience and real-time guidance. MacNeil highlighted flexibility as a top priority, leveraging Gen Z's strengths in electronic health records implementation and providing mentorship where needed. The Employee Student Nurses program and Earn and Learn Programs were mentioned as ways to integrate and support new entrants into the workforce.

Nader suggested that Gen Z's emphasis on work-life balance and flexibility reflects desires that previous generations had but did not express. Flexibility should be tailored to individuals' life stages rather than strictly by generation, leveraging diverse skills and perspectives across all team members.

## Leaders as Mentors

Nader stressed the need for leaders to have time for reflection and engagement with their teams to understand their needs, creating opportunities for mentorship and coaching. MacNeil emphasized long-term planning and learning from newcomers, incorporating planetary health and climate change into strategic plans. Kimens added the importance of meaningful interactions and engagement on the unit, ensuring programs and processes translate into real, lived experiences for Gen Z employees.

Kovacic concluded by emphasizing the principle "nothing about them without them," advocating for involving employees in future planning to ensure better service for patients and residents.

## Summary of Presentations

### Healthcare Excellence Canada's HHR Initiatives

Jan Byrd, CHE

The **Health Workforce Innovation Challenge** aimed to inspire and support healthcare leaders and teams working on innovative solutions to support and retain the current workforce, addressing critical issues like patient and workforce safety. According to CIHI's 2022-2023 data, 1 in 17 hospital stays involved unintended harm, linked to workforce issues such as sick time, purchased hours and overtime. The Challenge invited publicly funded teams to further their existing initiatives or try new approaches to **retain and support the workforce** in one or more of six areas: fostering safe work environments, enhancing sustainable staffing models, building flexible work structures, providing equitable and appropriate compensation, ensuring supportive and inclusive workplaces, and supporting career advancement. With 148 teams participating and over \$700,000 awarded, the initiative reached over 20,000 healthcare workers.

Additionally, a policy lab was held to explore the factors that support the retention of internationally trained healthcare workers, including multi-sectoral considerations related to settlement, mentorship, regulatory approaches, and the holistic needs of health professionals and their families. The initiative aims to develop policy considerations by July 31, 2024.

HEC held a second policy lab examining use of staffing agencies, exploring factors related to their use, motivations for staff choosing agency work, and how to optimize their role in health systems. A framework that considers impacts to value, quality and safety, and recruitment and retention was shared. Policy considerations will be published in Fall 2024.

## Gen Z in the Workplace

Steve Kovacic, CHE

By 2025, Gen Z will make up 27% of the workforce, with many aiming to ascend the career ladder or manage employees within five years post-college. They anticipate working with an average of four organizations and prioritize growth opportunities, generous pay, positive impact, job security, comprehensive benefits, flexible hours, and mentorship. Gen Z values honesty, integrity, and mentorship in managers and are adept at adopting new technologies, playing a crucial role in healthcare modernization. However, there's a declining interest in healthcare careers post-pandemic, highlighting the need for proactive, inviting environments. Gen Z's strengths include adaptability, resilience, multitasking, and digital proficiency, while they need effective mentors, work-life balance, and continuous learning opportunities.

Preparing for Gen Z involves focusing on mentorship, experiential learning, flexibility, and addressing systemic issues, leveraging their tech skills for modernization, and providing holistic support like housing and childcare. Emphasizing micro-credentialing, micro-learning, and accelerated education will be essential for future generations.

Summary of Small Group Dialogue

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What actions are being taken by health organizations to engage, support, and retain the HHR workforce?

Health organizations are actively engaging, supporting, and retaining the HHR workforce through a variety of inclusive and collaborative strategies. These include forming working groups and committees involving frontline staff, enhancing benefits and support, offering flexible work arrangements, and providing financial incentives. Emphasis is placed on equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as shifting the focus to workload, wellness, and working conditions. Regular feedback mechanisms, leadership engagement, and transparent communication are prioritized, along with comprehensive training, development, and safety initiatives. Recognition and appreciation events, strategic recruitment efforts, and robust wellness programs further contribute to creating a supportive and sustainable work environment.

What roles to health leaders play in supporting their organizations actions?

The participants responses outlined key strategies for effective leadership and team engagement. The responses emphasized leading by example through visible and physical presence, encouraging meaningful conversations that promote wellness ideas, and fostering ongoing brainstorming sessions. Transparency and care were highlighted as essential, urging leaders to speak up and inquire about what matters to their team members. Empowerment is

crucial, with a focus on removing barriers for frontline management and empowering staff to take on leadership roles. Achieving results involves actively responding to established plans, distilling drivers of motivation, and leveraging technology for efficiency gains. Leaders are also urged to prioritize staff satisfaction through initiatives in wellness, mental health, and recognition, while advocating for necessary resources and supporting innovative projects. Additionally, the responses stressed the importance of engaging with communities, and fostering academic partnerships to drive systemic transformation and accountability.

## Summary of Participant Poll

What roles do health leaders play in engaging, supporting, and retaining the HHR workforce?

Effective leaders should be present, visible, caring, supportive, authentic, curious, empathetic, accessible, brave, and humble. They need to actively listen to understand and gather feedback, act to help and engage staff, communicate truthfully, embrace challenges, and lead by example. Leaders should also continuously give feedback, support professional development, invest in frontline leadership and career planning, innovate, follow through on commitments, empower teams, keep safety in mind, recognize and celebrate achievements, monitor improvements, and enjoy their work. Building a common purpose, understanding work-life balance, strategic workforce planning, creating psychological safety, sharing a clear vision, addressing systemic challenges like EDI initiatives, prioritizing HHR, managing workloads, providing flexibility, and encouraging wellness within teams are also crucial actions for leaders.