

Morale slumps under daunting rise in workload

C+D Salary Survey reveals mass unrest in profession

Rob Finch

Nearly a third of employee pharmacists and locums are likely to quit the profession and more than a third are already planning to leave their current job, the C+D Salary Survey has found.

A poll of 928 pharmacists revealed morale at rock bottom across the sector.

More than three-quarters of those surveyed said they expected to be stressed or very stressed in 12 months' time.

The survey included responses from employee pharmacists, locums, pharmacy managers and owners. One anonymous respondent to the survey said that workloads "are becoming unsupportable". A female pharmacist from Hampshire said she was "not paid enough for the stress level".

And a 38-year-old pharmacist said she regretted studying pharmacy. Another pharmacist, from Wales, said: "This profession is going nowhere."

John Murphy, of the Pharmacists' Defence Association, said: "I don't doubt people are more stressed.

"Employers have been trying to reduce staffing levels while prescribing figures have gone up. You've got increasing workload and decreased support staff."

Morale had slumped under the pressure of huge professional change, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society said. David Pruce, director of practice and quality improvement, told C+D: "If this is a true reflection of how the profession feels then it's very worrying. It's a time of great change and great uncertainty."

Mr Pruce denied that the RPSGB could have done more to shield members from rising workloads. "It's not that the Society has allowed it. There are a lot of things coming together and all pharmacy bodies have a responsibility."

Barbara Sutherland, resourcing manager for Lloydspharmacy, linked low morale to the impact of category M cuts.

She said: "We know adjustments are starting to have a real impact."

Are you under too much pressure?
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How stressful will pharmacy be in 12 months' time?

ABOUT THE SAME	24%
VERY STRESSED	34%
STRESSED	42%

How likely are you to leave the profession?
(1=Very unlikely, 5=Very likely)

5	12%
4	16%
3	27%
2	20%
1	25%

Are you planning to leave your current job?

NO	65%
YES	35%

Are you planning to open a pharmacy?

YES	11%
NO	89%

Source: C+D Salary Survey 2008, figure for all respondents

Salary TALK

Have your stress levels gone up in the past year?



"Yes – probably they have gone up in the past year. It's a whole mix of things – financial uncertainty with category M, but the increase in patient expectation has probably been the main cause."

George Romanes, GLM Romanes Ltd Pharmacy, Berwickshire

"Yes. Because we're trying to find new ways of working with the new contract without necessarily having the skills. When you're making changes in working practices it is always more difficult than maintaining the status quo."

"As an individual contractor we actually have a lot more to do as individuals under the new contract than multiples would have."

Cath Boury, Newland Community Pharmacy, Hull

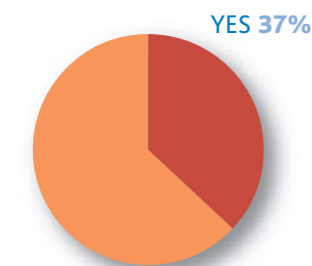


Next week...

Salary Survey talking point: Should locums and employed pharmacists get incentives to perform MURs?

'Don't choose this career' says profession

Would you recommend pharmacy as a career?



NO 63%

Source: C+D Salary Survey 2008, figure for all respondents

Many pharmacists are so dissatisfied with the profession that they would not recommend it as a career, the C+D salary survey suggested.

Sixty three per cent of employed pharmacist and locum respondents said they would not endorse pharmacy as a career.

Such feelings have implications for both staff motivation and performance and for recruitment of young people to the profession.

Fin McCaul, chairman of the Independent Pharmacy Federation, said the findings were "bad news for pharmacy".

But he added: "Low morale at the minute is hopefully just a blip."

Jane Lumb, Numark's training manager, reminded pharmacists that the profession still offers a unique opportunity to add value to a community while running a business.

A possible reason for the lack of job satisfaction is the problems pharmacists have faced when trying to take on additional services and clinical roles.

Roger Walker, professor of pharmacy practice at Cardiff University, said many pharmacists consider themselves overqualified

for what they do, "particularly those who continue to work in dispensing factories with ever-growing workloads".

Will Swain, a young pharmacist at Weldricks, said he hoped the future of the profession was not in the dispensary, saying pharmacists should be released from this "ball and chain".

However, Mr Swain felt some pharmacists could do more to help themselves. They could accept that the profession is changing, for example, and attempt medicines use reviews, he said. **ZS**

Web poll: Have your stress levels gone up?

Yes: 49%
No: 51%

Armchair view: Increased workload, greater demands for services, maybe even longer hours and all for little extra money? It's no wonder half of you are more stressed than last year.

This week: Do you regret becoming a pharmacist? Vote at www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk

Support swells for trade union

The vast majority of pharmacists want to join a trade union, the C+D salary survey has found.

A massive 80 per cent of the 408 employed pharmacists responding to the survey would join a trade union, with similar proportions of locums, pharmacy owners and technicians agreeing.

Michael Maguire, a pharmacist in Middlesbrough, said: "If a trade union made [a difference] and was able to negotiate so that morale was better – and could solve basic problems – that would be a step in the right direction."

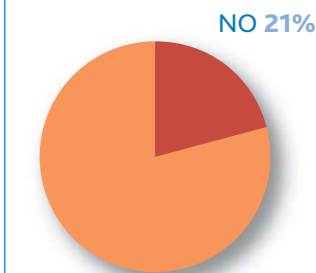
He added: "The current situation

is bizarre and unacceptable."

Nigel Clarke, chairman of the Clarke Inquiry on creating a new leadership body for pharmacy, said: "As the responses on our website show, this is clearly an issue of importance for our profession."

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society said a leadership body did not need to be a trade union to be influential at government level. David Pruce, of the RPSGB, said: "The professional body should be influential and not afraid to stand up for professional issues. That message can be stronger if it is not a trade union." **RF**

Would you join a trade union?



YES 79%

Source: C+D Salary Survey 2008, figure for all respondents