

Health workforce research theme | South Africa

Title	A longitudinal study of the job choices of a cohort of South African nurses to inform human resource policy interventions
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Start date	2012

Background

Whilst the severe shortage of health workers is a major constraint to achieving global health goals, it is not the only factor contributing to the human resources for health crisis. Many low and middle income countries (LMICs) also experience skill imbalances, mal-distribution of labour between rural and urban areas, international migration, low motivation and poor performance amongst staff. These problems are compounded by inadequate information systems and a lack of data on the career paths of health workers, which are necessary for effective human resource planning and management.

Purpose of the research

This research project seeks to remedy the lack of data on internal mobility patterns in LMICs by prospectively following a cohort of nurses in South Africa. A cohort of 377 new nursing graduates was established in South Africa as a CREHS research project and maintained 98% follow-up after two years. This current project will continue to monitor the job choices of the nursing cohort for a further five years (2012-2016). Specifically, it will analyse the mobility patterns of cohort members' with regard to where they work, when they move, where they move to, and the reasons for the decisions.

The research also aims to identify effective, practical interventions to improve health worker retention in rural areas and public sector services by evaluating the influence of different incentives on job location and career choices.

Study methods

A longitudinal prospective cohort design, with annual repeated surveys will be used to develop a panel dataset of nurses' personal characteristics, job choices and characteristics, job satisfaction and job location choices over a period of five years.

A more detailed questionnaire and a Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) will be undertaken in the fourth year of the study. These will measure the job satisfaction of the cohort members, and look at any differences between intended and actual career choices and preferences. DCEs provide information on respondents' preferences for different types of job characteristic (e.g. location, salary, training opportunities).

Related publications

Modelling human resources policies with Markov models: an application to the South African nursing labour market

Appealing to Altruism: an alternative strategy to address the health workforce crisis in developing countries

Cost-effectiveness analysis of human resources policy interventions to address the shortage of nurses in rural South Africa

Analysing the implementation of the rural allowance in hospitals in North West Province, South Africa

Policy interventions that attract nurses to rural areas: a multicountry discrete choice experiment

Understanding nursing students' attitudes towards working in rural areas in South Africa

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This research is funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development. However, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the department's official policies.

