

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Nursing Workforce in Slovakia

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Abstract : The pandemic has had a significant impact on our lives. One of the most affected professions is the nursing profession. Nurses are closest to the patient, spend the most time with him, support him, often replace the closest family members, and of course, are part of the whole treatment process. Current nurses have more competencies and roles than in the past. The healthcare system has reached a turning point, also in connection with the spreading Delta variant and the risk of the arrival of the third wave. The lack of nurses is a long-term problem, but it did not arise by itself. The reasons for the departure of nurses from the health care system are not only due to the increasing average age of nurses and midwives in Slovakia and their retirement. Thousands of nurses are leaving due to poor working conditions, low wages, and poor management of individual workplaces. We need to keep older nurses in the health care system, otherwise, we risk their early departure. The pandemic only exacerbates this situation, and the associated risks, such as occupational infections or enormous overload and exhaustion, only accelerate the exit from the profession. According to current data from the register of nurses and midwives, we canceled 772 registrations from January to September 2021, and 584 nurses requested the suspension of registration due to non-performance of the profession. During the same period, we registered only 240 new nurses graduate. We have had this significant disparity here for a long time. For the whole of 2020, we canceled 911 registrations and suspended 973 registrations. We registered a total of 389 graduates. Our system loses hundreds of graduates a year and loses experienced nurses with decades of experience who leave due to poor working conditions, wages and suffer from burnout. Such compensation should also be awarded to the families of health professionals who have lost their lives due to work and to COVID-19. These options can also be motivating for promising people interested in studying nursing, who can gradually replace the missing workforce. This purchase is supported by the KEGA project no. 015KU-4/2019.

Keywords : pandemic, COVID-19, nursing, nursing workforce, lack of nurses

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