

DOCUMENT RESUME

02256 - [A1332319]

[Results of Survey of Current and Former Veterans Administration Health Care Workers]. HRD-77-94; B-133044. May 9, 1977. 8 pp. + 2 enclosures (2 pp.).

Report to Max Cleland, Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Administration; by Gregory J. Ahart, Director, Human Resources and Development Div.

Issue Area: Personnel Management and Compensation (300); Health Programs (1200); Health Programs: Health Providers (1202).

Contact: Human Resources and Development Div.

Budget Function: Health: Health Care Services (551); Veterans Benefits and Services: Hospital and Medical Care for Veterans (703).

Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

A survey of present and former employees in selected occupations in the Department of Medicine and Surgery of the Veterans Administration concerned causes of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, reasons for accepting Government health care jobs, and the probability of changing jobs within a year. Questionnaires were sent to 362 former employees, of whom 186 responded, and to 2,527 present employees, of whom 2,099 responded. Findings/Conclusions: Benefits and salary were the two principal reasons given by both former and present employee respondents for accepting the job. Other major reasons included needing a job, wanting to work in the Federal Service, and wanting to work in a health care career. The majority of both former and present employee respondents were satisfied with their salary and benefits. Job stability, the ability of fellow workers, and the type of patients were aspects of the work assignments with which most former and present employees were satisfied. About 30% of the present employee respondents were either undecided or anticipating a job change within the next year. The major reasons for seeking a new job were wanting more opportunities for promotion, needing a higher salary, wanting more opportunities for career development, and wanting to get more education or training. (SC)

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

HUMAN RESOURCES
DIVISION

MAY 9 1977

B-133044

The Honorable Max Cleland
Administrator of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Administration

Dear Mr. Cleland:

During our recent review of problems facing the Veterans Administration in recruiting and retaining health care workers, we sent questionnaires concerning employee satisfaction and job intentions to present and former employees in selected occupations within the Department of Medicine and Surgery (DM&S) (see enclosure I).

In a report to the Congress we summarized the responses to these questionnaires 1/. We believe that a more complete presentation of the responses would be of benefit to VA and that is the purpose of this report.

The results presented here are for those who answered a particular question and do not necessarily reflect the total number who responded; not all respondents answered each question and, for certain questions, respondents could give more than one answer. Only selected results are presented in this letter--those that pertain to causes of satisfaction or dissatisfaction among current and former employees, reasons for accepting first government health care job, and the probability of changing jobs within a year.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF FORMER
DM&S HEALTH CARE WORKERS

We sent questionnaires to 362 former DM&S health care workers and received a total of 186 responses, or 51 percent.

I/
"Recruitment and Retention of Veterans Administration Health Care Workers Are Not Major Problems," (HRD-77-57, 3/31/77).

We asked, in addition to other questions, why the respondents took their first Government health care job. As stated in our report, benefits and salary were the two principal reasons given by the respondents for accepting the job. Below is a list of reasons which the respondents believed were important factors in their decision to accept their first Government health care job.

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Number selecting this reason</u>	<u>Percent of respondents</u>
Benefits	110	59
Salary	102	55
Needed a job	66	36
Wanted to work in the Federal Service	66	36
Job stability	58	31
Wanted to work in a health care career	56	30
Opportunities for career development and training	53	29
Promotion opportunities	52	28
Location or geographic area	47	25
Kind of patients	31	17
Wanted to change jobs	25	13
Influence of friend, family, relative, or acquaintance	24	13
Other reasons	22	12
Personal situation	16	9
Impressed by abilities of people working in hospital	15	8
Looks of hospital and working conditions	15	8
Opportunities for premium pay and overtime pay	13	7
Influence of recruiting people and literature	6	3

In response to our question on how satisfied the respondents had been with various aspects of their job, the majority had been satisfied with their salary and benefits. Below is a list of the job aspects and the percentage of respondents who indicated satisfaction.

<u>Aspects of work assignment</u>	<u>Number who responded</u>	<u>Percent satisfied</u>
Benefits	178	95
Salary	180	91
Job stability	177	89
Ability of fellow workers	178	88
Type of patients	177	76
Use of training	178	73
Public service	169	71
Personal situation	168	69
Civil Service system	166	66
Hospital conditions	176	65
Promotion opportunities	178	63
Work relationship with supervisors or management	178	63
Job conditions	177	63
Ability of supervisors, management and physicians	176	60
VA system	176	60
Other opportunities	164	59
Opportunities for career development and training	176	56
Other considerations	14	7

In response to a question on employees' reasons for leaving DM&S, the reasons most frequently given were various job characteristics. Page 28 of our report to the Congress lists these reasons in detail.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS EMPLOYED BY DM&S

We sent questionnaires concerning compensation, job intentions, and other employee satisfaction matters to

health care workers in selected occupations who were employed by the 12 VA hospitals which we visited (see enclosure II). Of the 4775 non-supervisory employees at these hospitals, we distributed questionnaires to 2527 employees and received 2099 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 83 percent.

The majority of the respondents were satisfied with the salary and benefits of their job. The following list shows the percentage of respondents who were satisfied with various aspects of their work assignment.

<u>Aspects of work assignment</u>	<u>Number who responded</u>	<u>Percent satisfied</u>
Job stability	1975	96
Benefits	2010	95
Ability of fellow workers	1981	95
Type of patients	1972	87
Personal situation	1907	86
Work relationship with supervisors or management	1995	85
Public service	1882	85
Job conditions	1986	82
Use of training	1986	81
Premium and Overtime pay	1951	80
Ability of supervisors, management and physicians	1982	78
Civil Service system	1929	78
VA system	1984	77
Hospital conditions	1980	77
Salary	2021	76
Other opportunities	1828	70
Opportunities for career development and training	1983	66
Promotion opportunities	1974	57
Other considerations	95	26

As shown above, most respondents to our questionnaire were generally satisfied with the aspects of their present work assignment.

In response to the question on why they took their first Government health care job, over 40 percent stated that salary and/or benefits were the most important reasons for accepting their job. Reasons given by the respondents are listed below.

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Number selecting this reason</u>	<u>Percent of respondents</u>
Benefits	990	47
Salary	852	41
Wanted to work in Federal service	807	39
Job stability	768	37
Needed a job	668	32
Wanted to work in health care career	554	26
Location or geographic area	541	26
Opportunities for career development and training	466	22
Promotion opportunities	441	21
Wanted to change job	406	19
Influence of friend, family, relative or acquaintance	324	15
Kind of patients	235	11
Personal situation	173	8
Premium and overtime pay	155	7
Locks of hospital and working conditions	147	7
Impressed by ability of people working in hospital	143	7
Other reasons	103	5
Influence of recruiting people and literature	73	4

The probability of changing jobs within a year was high for about 14 percent of our respondents. An additional 16 percent were undecided about changing jobs. The following reasons were given by those employees either undecided or anticipating a job change.

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Number selecting this reason</u>	<u>Percent of respondents</u>
Wanted more opportunities for promotion	395	66
Needed higher salary	359	60
Wanted more opportunities for career development	335	56
Wanted to get more education and training	334	55
Desired a promotion to more skilled health care job	260	43
Training and experience not used well	242	40
Desired a better job	190	32
Did not respect the ability of supervisors, management, or physicians	155	26
Did not like work relationship with supervisor or hospital managers	143	24
Did not like working conditions	134	22
Wanted to work with different types of patients	134	22
Did not like hospital conditions	127	21
Wanted to go to a different part of the country or location	125	21
Wanted to try a different type of job career	119	20

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Number selecting this reason</u>	<u>Percent of respondents</u>
Did not like job situation	109	18
Needed more premium overtime pay	89	15
Wanted more job stability	60	10
Felt it was time to move	60	10
Needed to be with family and the family moved	46	8
Needed to stay home (pregnancy, family, children, etc.)	35	6
Did not respect ability of fellow workers	35	6
Wanted to take wage board job	31	5
Did not like working for Federal Government	24	4

CONCLUSIONS

Health care workers responding to our questionnaire who were employed by DM&S at the time of our review were generally satisfied with their compensation and most aspects of their assignment or career possibilities. This general satisfaction is further emphasized by the fact that about 70 percent of the respondents plan on continuing their career in DM&S. Both the former and current employees indicated salary and benefits as being the primary motivations in accepting their first Government health care job. The most frequent reasons given for leaving DM&S were various job characteristics, not salary or benefits.

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The computer-generated tabulation from which this detailed summary information is based is too voluminous to

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enclose in this report. We believe, however, that this information would be informative to DM&S officials. We would be willing, therefore, to share the detailed questionnaire tabulation data with VA. If you would like this information, please contact Mr. George D. Peck, Assistant Director, on 389-5281.

We appreciate the assistance given us during our review.

Sincerely yours,



Gregory J. Ahart
Director

Enclosures - 2

ENCLOSURE I

ENCLOSURE I

OCCUPATIONS SELECTED FOR REVIEW

Registered nurses

Licensed vocational practical nurses

Nursing assistants

Physical therapists

Occupational therapists

Medical technologists

Radiology technicians--diagnostic

Pharmacists

Nuclear medicine technicians

Inhalation therapy technicians

VA HOSPITALS REVIEWED

	<u>Number of beds</u>
Facilities over 500 beds:	
Atlanta, Georgia (note a)	550
Long Beach, California (note a)	1,591
Salt Lake City, Utah (note a)	506
West Haven, Connecticut (note a)	725
Facilities under 500 beds:	
Fort Harrison, Montana	160
Lake City, Florida	363
Phoenix, Arizona	299
Providence, Rhode Island (note a)	353
Psychiatric facilities:	
Brentwood, California (note a)	470
Brockton, Massachusetts (note a)	897
Fort Lyon, Colorado	600
Murfreesboro, Tennessee	852

a/ Hospitals affiliated with medical schools.