Healthcare Burnout: Up to 90% of Nurses Considering Leaving by the End of 2022

Healthcare burnout was already a crisis – the pandemic was just the final straw. A recent survey of nurses across the U.S. found that up to 90% are considering leaving the field by the end of 2022. For most surveyed, burnout was the number-one-reason why they plan on leaving. Other issues cited include the lack of communication from upper management, resentment from staff regarding the use of traveler nurses who are getting paid far more and are at times less aware of hospital functioning, and the sense that management sees them as a resource rather than critical staff in healthcare. In addition, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that 500,000 seasoned nurses will retire between now and the end of 2022, creating a shortage of 1.1 million nurses.

The loss of personnel isn’t limited to nursing staff. As a result, many nurses are also expected to clean rooms, perform clerical work, and deal with broken information systems.

The use of the LEAN, ‘just in time’ supply chain theory applied to industrial work, has been applied to healthcare. LEAN essentially treats the human in the system as part of a machine. Healthcare is organized as an industry to produce profit rather than a service responding to human beings’ needs.

We all deserve to be treated like human beings. We should not be parts of the profit-making machine. This is a broken system, begging for a human revolt.

On Management’s Yo-Yo

Being at work is like being on a roller coaster… but not in a good way. Due to a shift change, some of us suddenly now work more days each week. Why? Because management thought this was a good idea.

For SAN workers, our schedules are rarely consistent. While we may work a lot one month, the next month we could hardly be scheduled. Why? So management can staff (and pay) the least amount of people, relying on at will, non-benefited workers to fill in their gaps.

But what has been management’s greatest idea? Getting us to point the finger at each other when their systems don't work. If someone inevitably calls in sick or can’t cover an extra shift, we shouldn't blame each other for being short staffed. It’s the fault of management, who has been playing us like yo-yos – whipping us around in whatever way serves their bottom line best. We're tired of whiplash, their games need to end!

The Struggle Against Price Gouging

Here in the United States, as we struggle to fill our gas tanks and grocery carts, corporate profit margins are at the highest that they have been since the 1950s. It is getting more and more difficult to survive and take care of our families.

But these problems are felt all around the world. From England to Indonesia, Lebanon to Haiti, working people are in bitter struggles against the extreme inflation that we are facing. Strikes and mass demonstrations are erupting. Perhaps it’s time to follow their lead and engage in struggles here too!

Sick with COVID? Or Sick of Work?

If you get sick with COVID, you get one week off, and don’t need to provide proof of a positive test. Some people are worried about the abuse of this policy, as though others may take the break without actually having the virus. This can be frustrating, because it means a greater workload for those who come in to work.

But not everyone who calls out is lying about having COVID. And even if they are, it’s likely because they’re exhausted and burned out. If we had adequate PTO and a manageable workload, we wouldn’t need to be using COVID as an excuse to get much needed time off!

So the real problem is not coworkers calling out sick (regardless of it they have COVID or not), it’s the short staffing and overwork we face every day.

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