

# Looking Ahead: Top 5 Challenges Nurse Managers Face in 2021

## From Shortages to Safety, They're Navigating the COVID-19 Tightrope

Healthcare organizations can no longer rely on the traditional nursing staffing methods of years past. COVID-19 has accelerated changes to the nursing workforce, requiring new staffing models and an urgent need to retrain and retain nurses. After all, nursing is headed toward a shortage, the experience-complexity gap is widening, and the needs of the nursing workforce are rapidly changing.

It's a whole new day for the nurse manager that requires a reset on healthcare delivery and how the workforce is prepared and trained for the future.

So how are nurse managers navigating and what are their priorities? **The Nurse Manager Market Survey 2020**, conducted by Wolters Kluwer in October 2020, delves into what these nurse managers face daily in acute, post-acute, and ambulatory care settings, the information resources and tools they use, and their challenges in each care setting. The group of 500 respondents primarily included nurse managers, directors of nursing, and nurse supervisors.

### 1 Finding *qualified* nurses continues to be a major issue

While experience on the job isn't the only criteria for a qualified nurse, it's a large part of it.

Respondents reported that almost a quarter, or

**an average of 21%**  
of their staff nurses have less than 2 years of experience.

Percentage of nurses who felt this is a major challenge



Acute settings:

**59%**



Post-acute settings:

**52%**



Ambulatory settings:

**53%**

### 2 Locating enough nurses is an ongoing mission

The need for nurses is great – the American Nurses Association (ANA) reports that more registered nurse jobs will be available through 2022 than any other profession in the United States.

Percentage of nurses who felt this is a major challenge

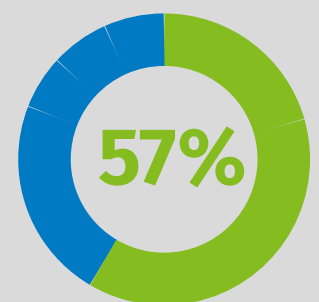
Acute settings: **53%** Post-acute settings: **57%** Ambulatory settings: **41%**

To avoid a further shortage, the country needs

**11 MILLION**

additional nurses.<sup>1</sup>

Nurse managers struggle with this daily across care settings, with post-acute care leading the way at 57%.



### 3 Determining appropriate staffing levels remains key

The right staffing levels ensure decreased errors, increased patient satisfaction, and improved nurse retention rates.<sup>1</sup> Shortages can have grave consequences – which no doubt explains why staffing is high on the list of challenges.

Percentage of nurses who felt this is a major challenge



Acute settings:

**50%**



Post-acute settings:

**45%**



Ambulatory settings:

**42%**

### 4 Burnout poses an ongoing threat

According to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), **at least 50% of caretakers** across medical fields recount symptoms of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and dissatisfaction.

This can result in poor job performance, medical mistakes on the job, high turnover rates, and even suicide.<sup>2</sup>

Percentage of nurses who felt this is a major challenge

Acute settings: **43%**

Post-acute settings: **48%**

Ambulatory settings: **35%**

### 5 Keeping the nurses they've invested in remains a focal point

Even before COVID-19, nurses dismayed by the hours and pressure put upon them due to nursing shortages left the profession.

Nursing is also feeling the impact of the massive wave of baby boomers retiring – an estimated

**1 MILLION**

registered nurses will retire by 2030.<sup>2</sup>

Percentage of nurses who felt this is a major challenge



Acute settings:

**38%**



Post-acute settings:

**32%**



Ambulatory settings:

**27%**

#### References:

- Haddad LM, Annamaraju P, Toney-Butler TJ. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; January 2020. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493175/>. Nursing shortage. [Updated 2020 Dec 14]. Accessed February 3, 2021.
- Staff writers. Top tips from nurses on dealing with burnout. NurseJournal; December 2020. <https://nursejournal.org/resources/tips-for-avoiding-nurse-burnout/>. Accessed February 3, 2021.