

# Why do senior ward nurses leave the acute setting? - An integrative review

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## Background

Increasing nurse turnover is a global and national concern as nurses are the biggest group of healthcare workers. High nurse turnover comes at a cost both for the employing organisation and to patient outcomes. High turnover and loss of senior ward nurses in acute areas increase patient mortality and morbidity along with increased patient length of stay. New Zealand has one of the highest turnover rates of nurses globally. As most nurses in New Zealand are employed in the acute sector, it is important to know why senior nurses leave the acute setting.



<https://www.tfshealthcare.co.uk/news/page/9/>

## Approach

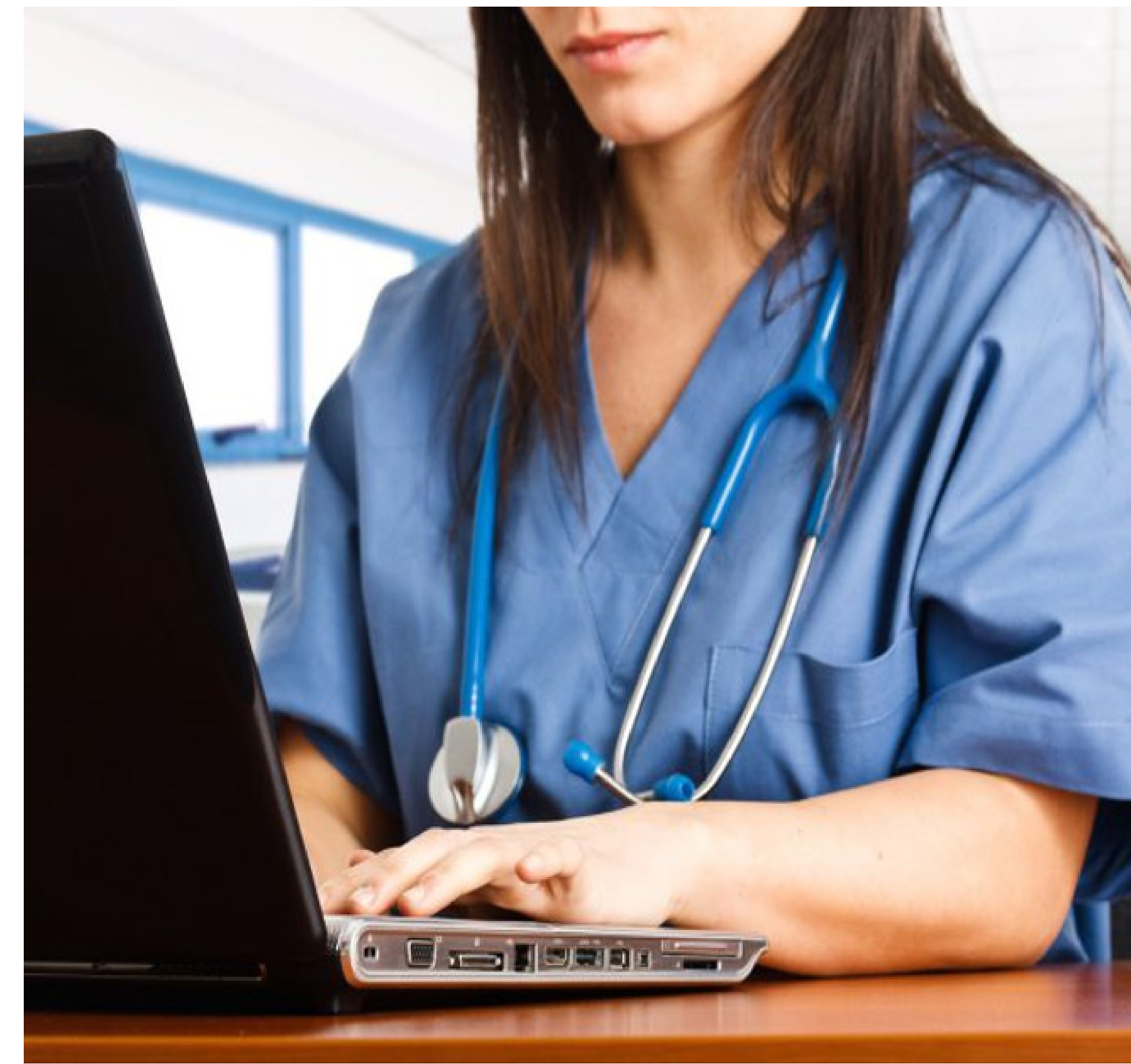
An integrative review framework was used, incorporating a five-stage process; the CASP tool evaluated, ranked and excluded studies. A total of 23 primary studies were analysed for the integrative review using thematic analysis.



<https://blogs.chihealth.com/sexual-domestic-trauma-sane-brings-compassionate-intervention-to-those-in-crisis/>

## Take home message

There are many ways to retain senior nurses through positive leadership, adequate staffing and professional development opportunities. Identified interventions such as showing appreciation and support for staff and being an approachable leader cost nothing but could have a positive effect on retaining these expert ward nurses



<https://www.ameritech.edu/blog/advice-starting-first-day-nursing-school/>

## Theme one: Support factors

Organisational manager support, appreciation and relationships with co-workers were the main ideas in this theme.

Nurses that wanted to leave their workplace felt:

- They weren't recognised for their skills and knowledge from the organisation and their direct manager
- They were unsupported and unappreciated by management.
- They had unapproachable, unsupportive, disinterested and unorganised direct managers
- There was bullying and mistrust among their work colleagues.
- A role model and positive collegial relationships was a reason some nurses stayed in otherwise high stress workplaces.

## Theme two: Workload factors

Workload including patient acuity, poor staffing and high nurse workload were the main ideas in this theme.

Nurses that wanted to leave their workplace felt:

- The patients were becoming more complex but the nurse-patient ratios remained the same.
- Working short staffed was more common.
- Senior nurses have a more complex patient load but are also required to support junior staff which leads to feelings of being overwhelmed.
- Healthcare was no longer patient focused but business focused.
- One NZ study identified that half the nurse who left their workplace would have stayed if there were more staff on the wards.

## Theme three: Professional factors

Career and professional development opportunities along with participation in hospital affairs were the main ideas in this theme.

Nurses that wanted to leave their workplace felt:

- They had limited opportunities to upskill or attend education.
- They wanted education directly relating to their practice and this was lacking.
- They had limited career or professional advancement opportunities.
- They had no say in hospital affairs or making policies but they were directly affected by these decisions.
- One NZ study identified that nurses thought there was too much emphasis on professional development and this contributed to them leaving.

## Implications for practice/recommendations

- Education for nurse managers about leadership and strategies to support and recognise the value of nursing staff during their workday or shift
- Manager visibility on the wards and communication with nurses
- Involving nurses in decision-making and policy development at an organisational level
- Professional recognition and reward programmes for nurses
- Fostering collegial and professional relationships between nurses
- Providing paid leave for professional development and education
- Annual performance reviews where career goals and promotion opportunities are discussed and implemented.