Staff satisfaction and organisational performance: evidence from a longitudinal secondary analysis of the NHS staff survey and outcome data

Martin Powell,1* Jeremy Dawson,2 Anna Topakas,2 Joan Durose1 and Chris Fewtrell1

1Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK
2Institute of Work Psychology, Sheffield University Management School, Sheffield, UK

*Corresponding author

Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published December 2014
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02500

Plain English summary

Staff satisfaction and organisational performance
Health Services and Delivery Research 2014; Vol. 2: No. 50
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02500

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

It has long been debated how people management practices link to organisational performance. Much research has been conducted, but mostly away from health care. This project aimed to fill some of this gap by testing links between staff experiences, absenteeism and turnover, and NHS trust performance.

We used secondary data from a 3-year period (2009–12) to test the model. In particular, we used extensive data from the national survey of NHS staff, absenteeism and turnover records, patient satisfaction, hospital mortality rates and infection rates. We used various statistical methods to examine links between these variables and to establish whether or not a change in one variable could be said to cause a change in another.

Overall, there was a clear pattern that better staff experiences are associated with better outcomes for employees and patients. In particular, negative experiences such as aggression, discrimination or perceiving unequal opportunities were harmful to staff, increased absence and were also linked to lower patient satisfaction. Several positive staff experiences, reflecting the quality of jobs and positive attitudes about organisations, were associated with higher patient satisfaction and lower absenteeism. Although there were some relationships between staff experience and turnover, patient mortality and infection rates, these were not found consistently. Apart from absenteeism, there was little clear evidence for causal relationships between staff experience and outcomes.

Two Action Learning Sets, comprising managers, and patient and public representatives, broadly supported the emerging findings indicating which staff factors were the most important predictors of staff satisfaction and organisational outcomes.
Criteria for inclusion in the Health Services and Delivery Research journal

Reports are published in Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HS&DR programme or programmes which preceded the HS&DR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HS&DR programme

The Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was established to fund a broad range of research. It combines the strengths and contributions of two previous NIHR research programmes: the Health Services Research (HSR) programme and the Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) programme, which were merged in January 2012.

The HS&DR programme aims to produce rigorous and relevant evidence on the quality, access and organisation of health services including costs and outcomes, as well as research on implementation. The programme will enhance the strategic focus on research that matters to the NHS and is keen to support ambitious evaluative research to improve health services.

For more information about the HS&DR programme please visit the website: http://www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/hsdr

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its proceeding programmes as project number 10/1011/11. The contractual start date was in January 2012. The final report began editorial review in July 2013 and was accepted for publication in December 2013. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health.

© Queen’s Printer and Controller of HMSO 2014. This work was produced by Powell et al. under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).
Health Services and Delivery Research Editor-in-Chief

Professor Ray Fitzpatrick  Professor of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Oxford, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Tom Walley  Director, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies and Director of the HTA Programme, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor Ken Stein  Chair of HTA Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Andree Le May  Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (EME, HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

Dr Martin Ashton-Key  Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Consultant Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Matthias Beck  Chair in Public Sector Management and Subject Leader (Management Group), Queen's University Management School, Queen's University Belfast, UK

Professor Aileen Clarke  Professor of Public Health and Health Services Research, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Dr Tessa Crilly  Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Peter Davidson  Director of NETSCC, HTA, UK

Ms Tara Lamont  Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Elaine McColl  Director, Newcastle Clinical Trials Unit, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, UK

Professor William McGuire  Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads  Professor of Health Sciences Research, Faculty of Education, University of Winchester, UK

Professor Jane Norman  Professor of Maternal and Fetal Health, University of Edinburgh, UK

Professor John Powell  Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

Professor James Raftery  Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma  Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts  Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Institute of Child Health, UK

Professor Helen Snooks  Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Please visit the website for a list of members of the NIHR Journals Library Board:
www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk