

Creating Healthy Workplaces for All Health Care Workers

Graham S. Lowe, Ph.D.

Keynote talk, Health Sciences Association of Alberta, Industrial
Relations Conference, 7 November 2003, Edmonton.



Copyright © 2003 Graham Lowe Group

Main messages

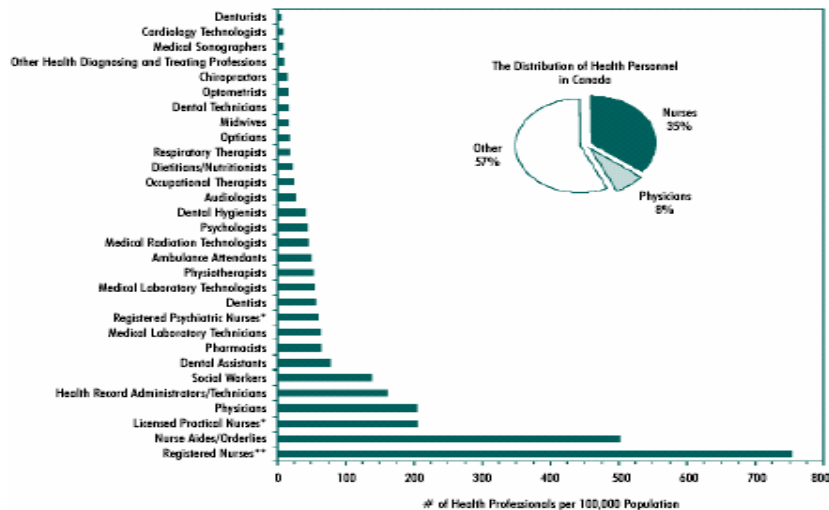
- Health human resource and workplace challenges are linked
- Need a system-wide renewal plan
- Championing your 'healthy workplace' agenda will meet your needs *and* improve the health care system

Your challenge

- HSAA represents 12,000 health care employees in 150 disciplines
- System can't function without you
- Nurses and MDs are setting the HHR agenda
- So need to create 'healthy workplaces' that meet diverse needs of ALL staff

Sharing Health Care Professionals

Together, registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs), and registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs) account for more than one-third of all health care workers. The rest come from a wide variety of occupations. The chart below shows the number of health professionals per 100,000 Canadians in 2000 for selected professions.



Note: Registered Psychiatric Nurses are only registered in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba; therefore the ratio for this group is calculated using the population of these four provinces only.

Source: Canada's Health Care Providers CIHI (<http://secure.cihi.ca>)



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada



Office of
Nursing Policy



Building the Future:
an integrated strategy for nursing
human resources in Canada

GAPS: health workplaces

- How quality of work life characteristics of health workers affects job satisfaction
- How QWL varies between health care providers
- How QWL affects recruitment, retention
- How QWL affects quality of patient care and patient satisfaction with their care

Source: *Canada's Health Care Providers*, CIHI.

GAPS: Health Human Resources

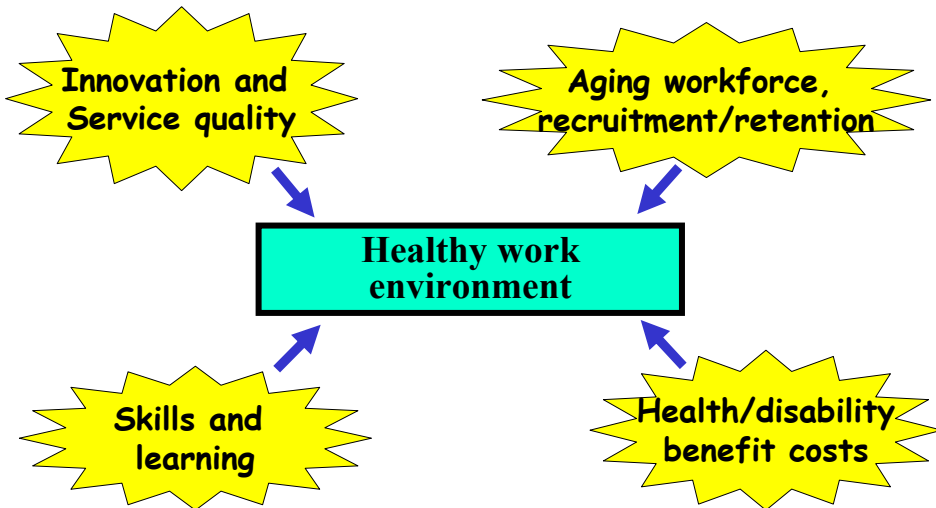
- “To date, little long-term physiotherapy human resource planning has taken place. Those initiatives that have been carried out are fragmented and limited in scope. These efforts have not addressed planning for a sustainable physiotherapy work force for the future...”

Source: *Physiotherapy Human Resources. Background Paper.* CAPR and CPA, 2002, p. 3.

Thinking about this question will help you create a vision of a healthy, high quality workplace...

- What makes you look forward to coming to work in the morning?

Four compelling reasons to create healthier work environments



What workers want

- When asked what they considered important in a job, Canadian workers give high priority to:
 - Respect
 - Interesting work
 - Good communication
 - Sense of accomplishment
 - Work-family balance
 - Develop skills and abilities
- Work environments impact all these factors

See: G. Lowe and G. Schellenberg, "Employees' basic value proposition: Strong HR strategies must address work values," *Canadian HR Reporter* (15 July 2002): 18, 23.

Employees' perceptions of a healthy work environment

INFLUENCES:

- **Most positive:** Good communication and supportive relationships (communication, co-workers, supervisor, recognition)
- **Most negative:** job demands (stressful, hectic, heavy workload, conflicting demands)

OUTCOMES:

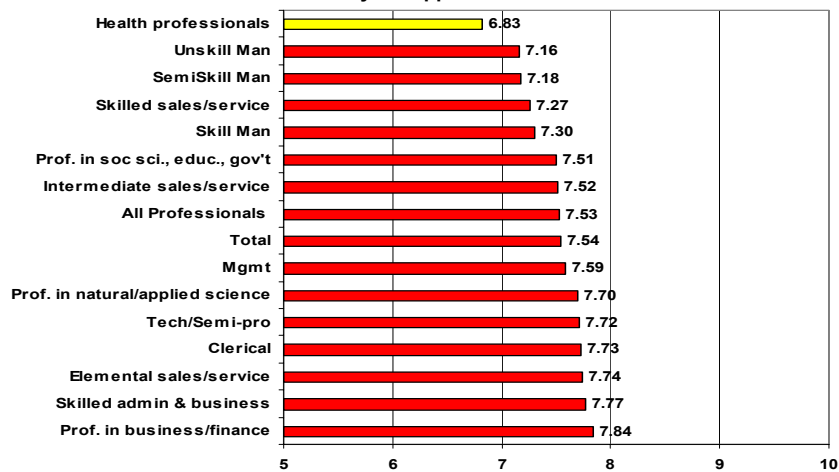
- Employees who perceived their work environments as "healthy" had higher job satisfaction, commitment and morale, and lower absenteeism, intent to quit

IMPLICATIONS:

- Supports a comprehensive model of workplace health that targets working conditions, work relationships and workplace organization for health promotion interventions.

Source: G. Lowe, G. Schellenberg, H. Shannon, "Correlates of employees' perceptions of a healthy work environment." *American Journal of Health Promotion*, July/August 2003.

Mean Score on Healthy & Supportive Work Environment Scale



Source: CPRN-Ekos Changing Employment Relationships Survey, Canada, 2000 (n=2118). See G. Lowe and G. Schellenberg, *What's A Good Job: The Importance of Employment Relationships* (Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2001).



Copyright © 2002 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

Positive impact on quality of work life/career satisfaction

- Challenging, enjoyable work
- Have a positive impact on care
- Professional pride
- Good co-worker relationships
- Satisfaction from working with people
- Able to use skills

Source: *2001 Survey of Health Professionals in Alberta*, PWC Consulting.

Negative impact on quality of work life/career satisfaction

- Increasing work complexity and workloads
- Rising patient/client expectations
- Burnout and fatigue
- Less holistic patient care
- Inadequate service integration
- Inadequate staffing levels
- Limited career prospects

Source: *2001 Survey of Health Professionals in Alberta*, PWC Consulting.

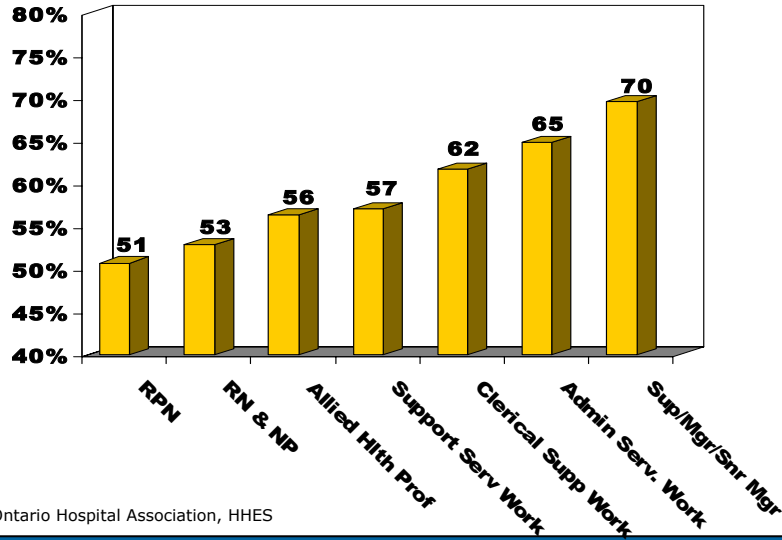
Insights from Ontario hospitals

Key factors in 'organizational health':

- Leadership
- Relationships
- Culture of respect
- Recognition and rewards
- Involvement in decision making
- Communication

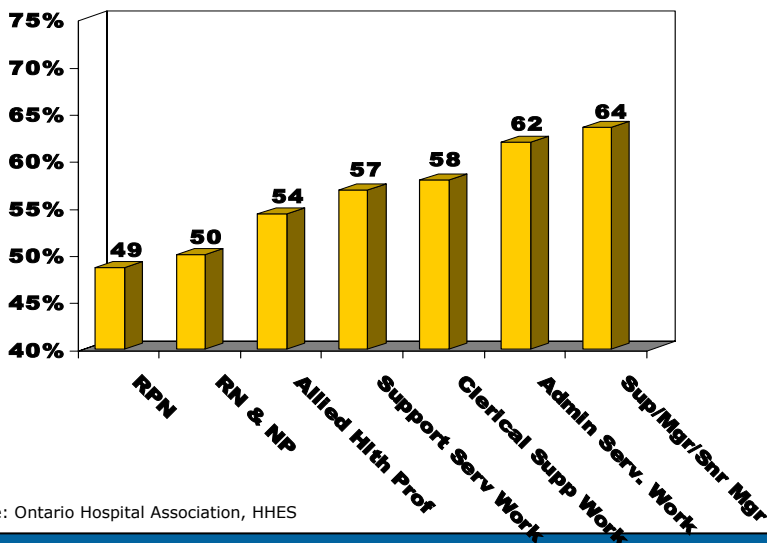
Source: Ontario Hospital Association (www.oha.com), 2002 Healthy Hospital Employee Survey (Data analysis by Brock University, WHRU) n=8,000, 40% response rate

Organizational Satisfaction by Job Type



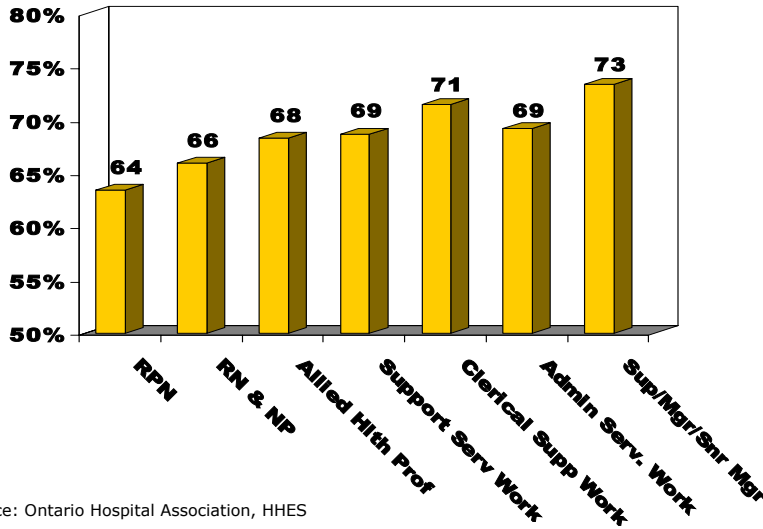
Source: Ontario Hospital Association, HHES

Healthy Workplace by Job Type



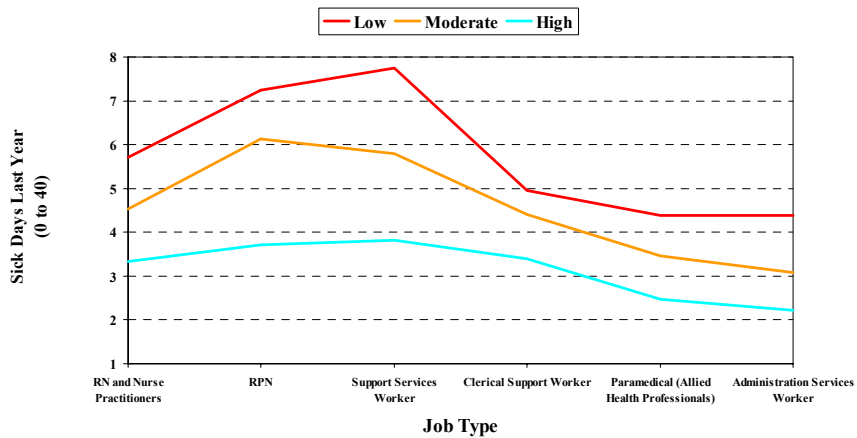
Source: Ontario Hospital Association, HHES

Job Satisfaction by Job Type

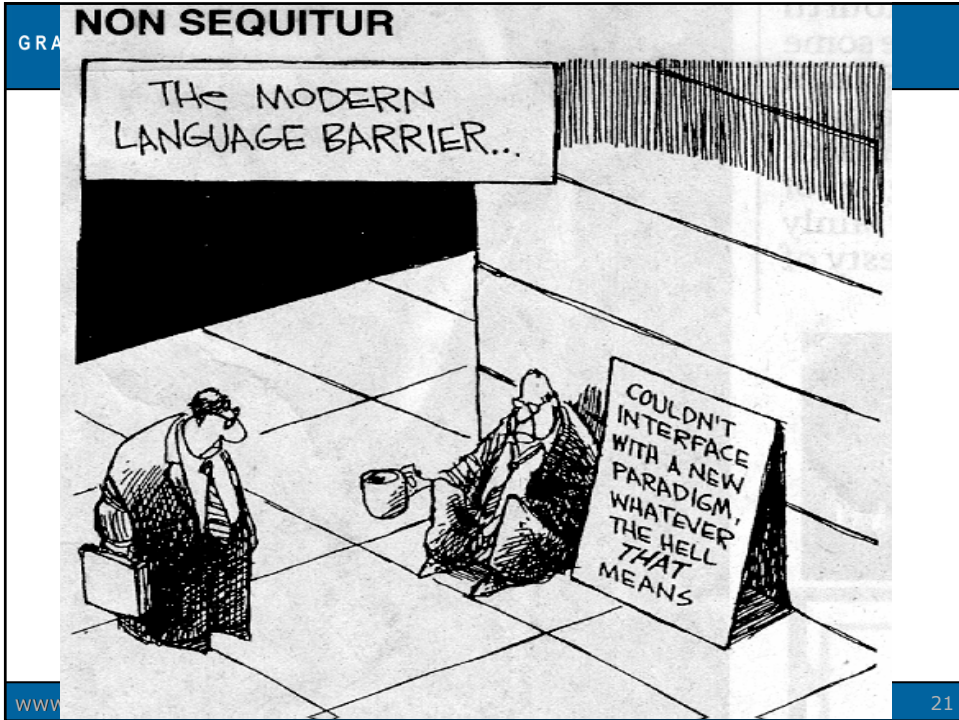


Source: Ontario Hospital Association, HHES

Sick Days Last Year by Job Type by Healthy and Supportive Work Environment (HSWE)



Source: Ontario Hospital Association, HHES



THE GRAHAM LOWE GROUP

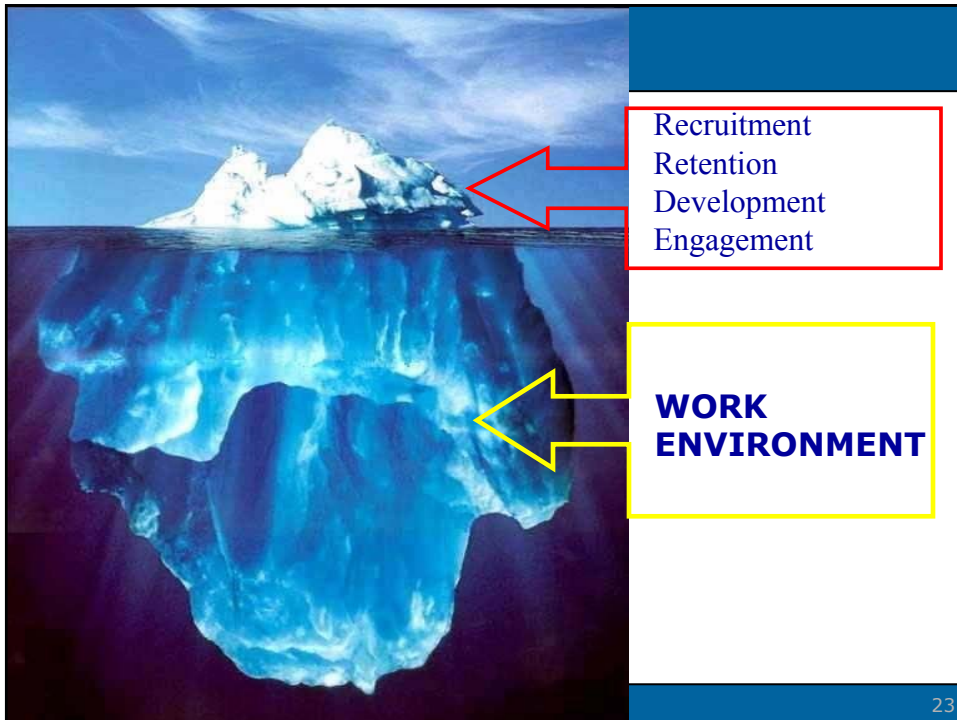
Focusing on up-stream factors

- Culture & values
- Leadership
- Relationships
- Work organization
- Job design/content
- HR practices
- Staffing strategies/levels

- Stress
- Injury
- Absenteeism
- Occupational disease
- Comp costs
- Claims adjudication
- Return to work

www.grahamlowe.ca

22



Healthy organization

- Links employee health and organizational performance
- Health promotion/population health logic
- Addresses individual health risk factors *and* workplace contexts
- Balances patient/client expectations, organizational goals, employee skills and health needs
- Requires collaboration of health promotion, HR, OHS and OD professionals
- Health is integrated into how the business operates

High quality workplace checklist

- ✓ Security
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Voice
- ✓ Openness
- ✓ Healthy
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Initiative
- ✓ Learning

The result is
meaningful,
fulfilling and
productive
work

How does your
workplace
measure up?

Source: G. Lowe, *The Quality of Work: A People-Centred Agenda* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Knowing vs. doing



Components of high quality health care workplaces

Environmental Pressures:

- Fiscal constraints
- Aging workforce, labour shortages, social change
- Complex regulatory and governance structures
- Rapid turnover in political leadership

Work environment, human resource practices

Management relations with unions and professional associations

Employment relationships, culture, leadership

Job design, organizational structure, technology

Outcomes for the organization, employees, patients

Different routes to healthy workplaces

- Health care organizations:
 - Magnet hospital; strategic HR; balanced scorecards; cooperative labour relations; employee and work environment indicators as quality measures (CQI); healthy workplace; employer / organization of choice
- Implications:
 - No "one best way"
 - Need guiding principles
 - Each organization needs to develop its own approach
 - This must fit its history, context and mission

Understanding the change process

- Change *should* provide continuous learning about how to do things better
- The approach needs to be both top-down and bottom-up
- The process determines the outcomes
- Organizational change can be stressful
- Resistance and inertia are common, so most major change initiatives fail

Ingredients of successful change

- **Urgency**
- **Vision**
- **Coalitions**
- **Communication**
- **Participation**
- **Early wins**
- **Institutionalization**

You can be a change agent

- Focus on your 'sphere of influence'
- Communicate why changes are 'urgent'
- Identify opportunities for improvement
- Build on successes and existing initiatives
- Collaborate within and across workplaces

You need a strategy...



Actions

- Integrate your agenda within the system:
 - Develop your own models, principles, goals
 - But also take a holistic approach to health care workplaces
 - Adapt models/strategies from nursing into your domains
- Partnerships:
 - CIHI, Health Canada, CHSRF, professional associations, universities
 - Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (NUPGE)
 - Create “A broad community of interest”
- Local workplace initiatives

What employers must do

- **“To address issues of job satisfaction, health districts need to show employees they are **valued**; they need to treat them with **respect**; and they need to treat them like **professionals**. They also need to build organizational commitment among their employees by involving front-line staff in planning and **decision-making**; by creating and supporting opportunities for professional **development and growth**; and by showing their **appreciation** for those on the front-line.”**
- Source: Allen Backman, *Job Satisfaction, Retention, Recruitment and Skill Mix for a Sustainable Health Care System*. Report to the Deputy Minister of Health for Saskatchewan. 2000, p. 83

Workplace model example: Magnet hospitals

- Developed in US to address nursing recruitment and retention
- Organizational characteristics account for improved working environments:
 - good relationships with colleagues and supervisors
 - adequate staffing
 - time available to plan and carry out work
 - participatory management
 - team work
 - opportunities for skill development and use
 - good leadership

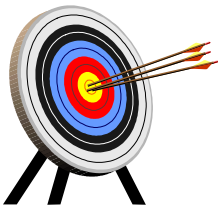
Partnership Example: Improving the quality of work-life for nurses

- Led by Canadian Nurses Association
- April 2002 multi-stakeholder workshop in Ottawa, unions involved
- Health Canada's Office of Nursing Policy a major supporter
- Reached consensus on five practical and available *Quality of Work Life Indicators for Nurses* (www.cna-nurses.ca) :
 - full time employment, absenteeism, overtime hours, professional development hours, unresolved grievances
- Indicators being tested by the University of Toronto
- These measures are imperfect, but must start now and build
- Canadian Council of Health Services Accreditation's *Indicators 2003* uses these

Action checklist

1. Employees are at the core of values and mission
2. Workforce and workplace renewal goals are in business plans
3. Accountability and incentives for treating people as investments
4. Employees, managers and unions are involved in the change process
5. Progress is measured and communicated
6. Continuously build on strengths, close gaps

Discussion



1. What actions are needed to create a healthy workplace for you?
2. How can HSAA help?
3. What's working now?