

# EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEPARTURE OF INTENSIVE CARE NURSES AND RETENTION MEASURES

## Background

A significant number of intensive care unit (ICU) nurses inform their intention to leave the profession, which leads a major risk of staff shortage [1].

## Aim

The aim of the study was to describe and understand the factors involved in the departure of ICU nurses.

## Methods

A cross-sectional exploratory study was conducted from 24 February to 9 April 9 2023. An online survey was available to nurses who had worked in ICU but left the sector between January 2018 and March 2023, in French-speaking Belgium

## Results

A total, 78 nurses who left the ICU participated at the study. Factors that influenced the departure were mostly perceived workload (74.4%) and a vision of care that did not correspond to the reality on the ground (69,2%). Other causes mentioned by more than 50% of respondents were also responsible for the departure, including: a lack of harmony between private and professional life (65.4%), working hours (65.4% and (60.3%), the experience of ethical dilemmas (55.1%), the COVID-19 pandemic (51.9%), relationships with hierarchy (50%) and perceived physical load (50%).

## Discussion

In this study, different factors appeared to have influenced the departure of nurses. Measures must be taken to limit nurses' intention to leave and allow nurses retention.

Limits: The study was based on a convenience sample (voluntary participation) and the survey may The questionnaire may not have been clearly visible have (nurses who have left ICU are difficult to recruit). We do not know the representativeness of the sample (the number of nurses who left the intensive care sector in the 5 last years is unknown). Therefore, the present study cannot be generalised to the whole of French-speaking Belgium.

## Implications and future perspectives

The factors identified in this study can help guide policy-makers and healthcare managers in improving ICU nurse retention. Completing this study with a qualitative study will provide a better understanding of the complex mechanism of the departure of ICU nurses.

## References

1. Bruyneel, A., Bouckaert, N., Maertens de Noordhout, C., Detollenaere, J., Kohn, L., Pirson, M., Sermeus, W., & Van den Heede, K. (2023). Association of burnout and intention-to-leave the profession with work environment: A nationwide cross-sectional study among Belgian intensive care nurses after two years of pandemic. *International journal of nursing studies*, 137, 104385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2022.104385>