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Creation of a Pharmacy Workforce and Culture team

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Background

The management of recruitment, rostering, payroll and actioning of HR issues is a vital but frequently undervalued aspect of Pharmacy Department administration. In the current post pandemic workforce environment, recruitment and retention is a priority for healthcare services. The National Skill Commission's 2022 Skills Priority List included a nationwide shortage of hospital pharmacists.(1) In a recent survey of Australian healthcare workers about the impact of the pandemic on frontline health care workers, 50% responded experiencing burnout and anxiety (2)

Aim

To centralise and streamline workforce management for a Pharmacy Department of over 300 staff, through the creation of a Pharmacy Workforce and Culture team, with aims to reduce vacancy rates, improve staff experiences and increase retention.

Method

A Pharmacy Workforce and Culture team was created in November 2022 (Figure 1). Existing roles and reporting lines were adjusted to reflect enterprise agreement requirements. Workforce and wellness activities undertaken by a variety of people in the department were centralised within the new team. Team responsibilities include:

- coordination of all recruitment,
- rotation management,
- rostering and leave management,
- onboarding and orientation scheduling,
- payroll and wellness initiatives.

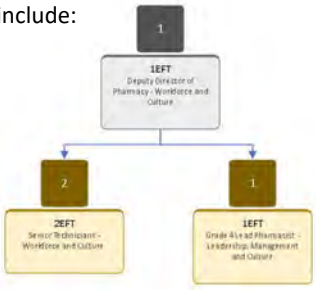

Figure 1: Team structure

A workforce strategy was developed, with initiative priorities based on feedback and departmental priorities (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Pharmacy Workforce Team strategy

Results

A number of initiatives have been implemented over the last 12 months, including: removal of manual timesheets, minimizing fixed term contracts, allowing flexible working arrangements, restructuring staff meetings, creation of a Culture and Wellbeing Committee and the SaferCare Joy in Work project.

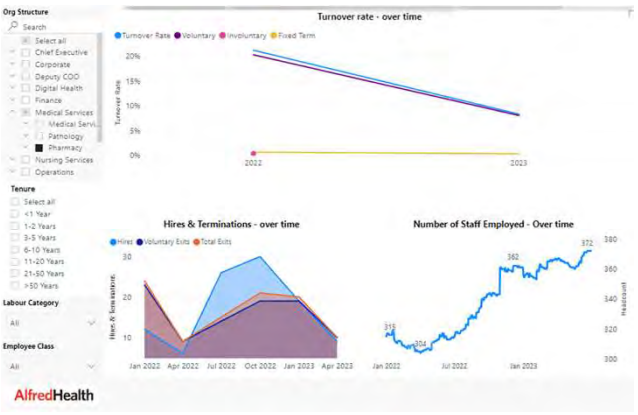

Figure 3: Staff retention

Since mid-2022, the Pharmacy Department staffing has increased 20%, to a current head-count of 372 staff, with 30% of staff with a tenure of 1-2 years. (Figure 3) This includes 7 Intern Pharmacists, 20 Foundation Residents, 8 Advanced Training Residents and 10 project staff in Digital Health, contributing to fixed term contracts and turn over. The vacancy rate is currently 1.8%, down from 11% in 2022, despite the growth. Turnover rate for staff has decreased from 21% in 2022 to 8% in 2023. Excess leave hours, a surrogate burnout marker, are 0.4% of total leave hours currently, indicating staff are able to take annual leave entitlements.

Discussion

Many factors may have contributed to these improvements in department measures. Many workforce related frustrations can lead to disillusion and feeling undervalued. Anecdotally, staff have appreciated the focus and value in workforce offered by the team, with a clear and centralized point for escalation and problem solving approach.

Conclusion

The Pharmacy Workforce and Culture team has created a centralised point for the management of workforce issues which is correlated with an improvement in workforce satisfaction measures.

References

1. Australian Government. 2023 Skills Priority list: Key Findings Report, Sept 2023
2. Smallwood N, et. al. High levels of psychosocial distress among Australian frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-sectional survey. *General Psychiatry* 2021;34(5):e100577