

More than 80 percent of UK GPs plan to quit or cut back on hours in next five years

October 28 2015, by Nicola Jones

A study conducted at University of Warwick suggests that most GPs are considering quitting general practice or having a career break in the next five years.

The research was conducted by Jeremy Dale, professor of [primary care](#), Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick. More than 1,100 GPs from across central England were questioned via an [online survey](#) which explored their career plans. Of the 1,192 who participated 978 (82%) stated they intended to leave general practice, take a career break and/or reduce their hours.

Professor Dale said: "This study revealed a huge level of dissatisfaction with a high percentage of GPs thinking of either career breaks or early retirement.

"It is a stark view of the profession – of those who want to leave more than 40% intend to quit altogether and 25% want to take a career break. When asked why they want to go most state it is because of dissatisfaction with current working arrangements."

Key factors influencing GPs aiming to quit or cut back hours were plans for a seven-day GP service, intensity of workload, volume of workload, lack of job satisfaction and time spent on unimportant administrative tasks.

Some GPs in the study, published in the journal *BMC Family Practice*

also highlighted changes to pension rules.

"Without urgent action the GP workforce crisis in England seems set to worsen"

Professor Dale, who also works part-time as a GP in Coventry, said:
"New models of professionalism and organisational arrangements may be needed to address the issues described in the study. Without urgent action the GP workforce crisis in England seems set to worsen."

The GPs were interviewed via an online questionnaire which drew on questions used in previous GP workforce surveys. Questions covered respondent demographics, practice characteristics, work-related morale and job satisfaction.

Amongst the comments made by clinicians were "We are being told that we will be seeing patients from 8 to 8, seven days a week, but we do not have enough GPs to cover the normal working schedule." (GP age 30-39), "More and more now though I feel as if getting the information onto the computer is more important to listening to the patient" (GP age 40-49), and "I have recently negotiated with my practice to reduce my hours from 3 to 2 days per week... I really don't feel I can cope working 3 days anymore. The pressure is tremendous. I get home after a 10 h day and feel as if I have been hit round the head with a brick...I am only 40 yet feel burnt out" (GP age 40-49).

The questionnaire was sent to doctors practicing within the West Midlands, a geographically, economically and ethnically diverse area taking in urban areas such as Birmingham , Wolverhampton and Coventry to rural counties such as Shropshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. In 2013 there were 3,667 GPs working in the West Midlands of whom 28.4% were in their fifties and just 12.2% were over 60.

The gender distribution of the survey participants was representative of the West Midlands GP population as was the age participation with the exception of the 50-59 age group which was 38% of respondents compared to the national average of 28%.

More information: Jeremy Dale et al. Retaining the general practitioner workforce in England: what matters to GPs? A cross-sectional study, *BMC Family Practice* (2015). [DOI: 10.1186/s12875-015-0363-1](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12875-015-0363-1)

Provided by University of Warwick

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