

# Health staff 'too stressed' to deal with disasters

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Increasing stress and a lack of motivation among healthcare staff could result in hospitals having to shut down in the wake of a major incident such as flooding or an earthquake, according to new research published

in the journal *Procedia Engineering*.

The research, led by Anglia Ruskin University, examined studies from across the world. It found that the capacity of clinical and non-clinical staff in hospitals and clinics to deal with incidents such as floods, earthquakes or other natural hazard is severely limited by a high workload and challenging targets which result in high levels of [psychological stress](#).

The findings also suggested that some staff are left feeling unmotivated and unattached to their workplace, meaning they are less likely to take the initiative in such a scenario and may even avoid coming into work. Only 21% of participants in the research expressed complete satisfaction with their jobs and workplace.

Dr Nebil Achour, lead author and Senior Lecturer in Healthcare Management at Anglia Ruskin University, said: "Healthcare services in many countries across the world are under severe strain, which leaves little opportunity for staff to be trained in disaster resilience. Yet healthcare is among the most critical services in any country during and after a major incident has occurred.

"Staff suffer from increasing workload and stricter performance measures with less flexibility. This has caused psychological and physical [stress](#) and makes them unable to respond to any further stress associated with major hazards.

"Many staff members do not feel attached to their workplace and do not feel that they have enough flexibility to take the initiative and lead their own way. This in turn also makes them less motivated to learn the extra skills needed to deal with a catastrophic event.

"Combined, these factors expose [healthcare services](#) to major risk of

staff shortage and thus inoperability when a major hazard does strike."

**More information:** Nebil Achour et al, Staff Stress: The Sleeping Cell of Healthcare Failure, *Procedia Engineering* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.proeng.2018.01.059](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2018.01.059)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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