

Pandemic redeployment caused stress to nurses: study

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Many nurses who were redeployed to front line roles during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced stress and anxiety as a result—but were also highly motivated to provide the best possible care—according

to a new study published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Researchers from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) spoke to 55 UK specialist or staff nurses at an NHS hospital in the south of England. Most of the nurses had been redeployed to a different role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Others had been given additional responsibilities or unfamiliar tasks within their existing role.

A total of 90% of those surveyed felt stressed or anxious during their redeployment, with some reporting that it affected their ability to work. However, 47% said the change of job role had no impact on their willingness to work, with many reporting they felt strong motivation to help during the pandemic.

Even among the 40% who did say the change of role affected their willingness at work, an altruistic theme emerged, with many nurses feeling that it was morally necessary, despite their reservations.

While 56% said they knew where to access formal support services, only 20% made use of them.

Co-author Dr. Nebil Achour, Associate Professor in Disaster Mitigation at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said: "Our findings suggest that nursing in the UK has been facing serious challenges before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. With 50,000 nursing vacancies before the [pandemic](#) hit, staff were already extremely stretched.

"The study revealed that redeployment, a critical workforce strategy, was a source of great stress and anxiety for [nurses](#)."

Co-author Helen Ballantyne, who carried out the research while studying at ARU, said: "Despite the concerns raised, around 44% of the participants viewed their redeployment positively, compared to 34%

who were negative about it. Nurses feel a strong duty of care and wanted to help as much as they could.

"Nursing staff play a major role in the resilience of the healthcare service, which cannot be achieved without a comprehensive resilience strategy that integrates [disaster preparedness](#) and management within the day-to-day operation. Failing to do so can lead to less resilient [staff](#) and a vulnerable healthcare service."

The research was published in the journal *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*.

More information: Helen Ballantyne et al, The Challenges of Nurse Redeployment and Opportunities for Leadership During COVID-19 Pandemic, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* (2022). [DOI: 10.1017/dmp.2022.43](https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2022.43)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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