

# Mobility specialists looking to quit profession

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More than a third of orthotists, specialists who improve quality of life for people with long term conditions and disabilities, would leave the profession if they could, according to a new study.

Orthotists provide gait analysis to patients and design and fit external

devices. These include insoles, braces and splints, to support and improve posture, function and mobility and manage pain and deformity.

However, new research by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) has found that 37% of orthotists working with NHS and private patients would leave the orthotic profession if they could, suggesting a potential retention crisis. The figure was roughly the same among those employed by the NHS and those employed by private companies.

Around 70% of orthotists in the UK work in NHS settings but are employed by private companies. The research found that the leading reason for orthotists wanting to leave the profession was treatment by their employer. Many respondents also reported they did not have enough time with patients during appointments, and that facilities were inadequate. Privately employed orthotists reported that their working conditions were significantly lower than those employed by the NHS.

Orthotic services provide financial value to the NHS. A previous report by the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency found that the health service could save £4 for every £1 spent on improving orthotics services, because patients who access these services suffer fewer falls and require less pain relief or surgical interventions.

Orthotics services provide [treatment options](#) for people with a wide range of conditions and orthotists work closely with a number of clinical specialties within the NHS including diabetes care, elderly medicine, neurology, orthopaedics, paediatrics, stroke and trauma teams.

Dr. Nebil Achour, co-author of the paper and Associate Professor in Disaster Mitigation at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said, "This study highlights the substantial challenges facing the orthotic profession in terms of staff satisfaction and retention. The perception among orthotists that they were treated poorly by their employer appears to be

the catalyst for a significant number wishing to leave not just their job but the profession overall. This is a vulnerability in our healthcare sector and needs to be addressed urgently.

"A resilient [healthcare sector](#) requires all professions and capabilities to be ready to respond effectively during times of adversities."

Lead author Katie Prosser, who carried out the research while studying for a Masters Degree in Healthcare Management at ARU, said, "These are concerning results with clear and considerable implications for the future of the orthotic workforce, as well as patients requiring their services. Usually if people are dissatisfied with an NHS post they can look to move into private roles. However, in this profession it appears there is little to be gained in terms of job satisfaction or conditions by doing this, which may lead orthotists to want to do something else entirely."

The [peer-reviewed study](#) is published today in the *British Journal of Healthcare Management*.

**More information:** Katie Prosser et al, Job satisfaction among NHS and private orthotists: a cross-sectional comparative study, *British Journal of Healthcare Management* (2023). [DOI: 10.12968/bjhc.2021.0081](#)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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