

Many of the changes in healthcare adopted during the COVID-19 crisis will result in more productive healthcare services and better patient outcomes – something much needed in many health systems globally. Here is what the IHF ‘Beyond COVID-19’ Task Force identified as some potential areas for transformation to meet key ‘people’ challenges faced by hospitals during the coronavirus pandemic.

PEOPLE



DELIVERING PERSON-CENTRED CARE

Many hospitals have put in place strict control measures to protect patients, families and staff from the risk of coronavirus infection.

With these strict restrictions, relatives and carers of patients can no longer make in-person visits, and so healthcare workers become the primary link between patients and their families. Many hospitals are harnessing digital technology to combat the loneliness and social isolation felt by patients by being away from families and carers.



ADDRESSING SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

High-quality care depends on having the right mix of staff, with the right skills and values, in the right place at the right time. To meet this challenge, hospitals can:

- **Increase opportunities and access to workplace learning:** make skills-building a key strategic lever for adapting to the ‘new’ normal by providing training on crisis management, telemedicine, resilience-building and working in multidisciplinary teams. Hospitals should review existing development offers to make sure they are virtually accessible, and not tied to ‘on site’ training.
- **Repurpose and upskill staff for rapid deployment to meet surge capacity needs.**
 1. Consideration of accelerated training and early certification of medical, nursing and other key trainee groups, for certain care pathways (e.g. critical care).
 2. Relax requirements in critical care units to enable staff from other departments to help with less complex tasks such as moving equipment, restocking units, resupplying bed areas.



INCREASING STAFF MOBILISATION & CAPACITY

Quickly mobilising the workforce in a crisis-situation has a direct impact on patient care and staff experience. Initiatives to ensure that there is sufficient staff capacity can include:

- Mobilisation of volunteers, retired healthcare professionals or professionals from sectors allied to healthcare, to meet staff shortage needs.
- Redeployment of staff across specialties – ensuring that revalidation quickly takes place and that existing training can be used in different healthcare areas.



LOOKING AFTER THE WELLBEING OF STAFF

COVID-19 pandemic places unprecedented pressure on people working in healthcare, so it is critical that their ‘core’ needs are met. These include:

- **Psychological support:** access to counselling, initiatives for monitoring staff for stress, illness, burn-out or provision of mental health ‘first aid’ training.
- **Financial support:** offer of ‘hazard pay’ for those working at risk; compensation or remuneration for overtime; life assurance schemes.
- **Environmental needs:** initiatives to address occupational health concerns; establishment of safe-return-to-work protocols after self-isolation.
- **Social needs:** initiatives to support a work/life balance; management of annual leave following a ‘vacation backlog’ from workers mobilised during the pandemic.