

White Paper: 2024 Survey Results – Canadian Society of Clinical Perfusion

Executive Summary

In January 2024, the Canadian Society of Clinical Perfusion (CSCP) conducted two comprehensive surveys: one targeting all certified members and another focusing on clinical team leaders. The goal was to assess current challenges, workforce dynamics, and organizational pressures affecting perfusionists across Canada. The findings reveal critical concerns related to workforce shortages, job dissatisfaction, and a concerning trend toward career attrition.

This white paper presents key highlights from both surveys, underlining the urgent need for policy and organizational shifts to maintain a sustainable and motivated perfusion workforce in the country.

Key Findings from the Leaders' Survey

The Team Leaders Survey aimed to capture data on staffing levels, future workforce planning, and operational challenges across perfusion centers in Canada. Noteworthy points include:

Participation Rate:

- 23 out of 37 centers participated, representing a 62% response rate.

-Vacancies and Predictions:

- As of early 2024, 38 vacancies were reported across the 23 centers that responded.
- Leaders predict an additional 19 vacancies over the next year, with further projected shortfalls of 17 vacancies in Year 2, and 32 vacancies in the next 3-5 years.

- Migration to the USA:

- Over the past three years, 12 Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) have left Canadian perfusion centers to work in the USA, exacerbating local staffing shortages.

- N+1 Staffing Model:

- 35% of centers reported operating without the N+1 staffing model (having one extra perfusionist on staff to cover unexpected absences). This raises concerns about overburdening current staff and increasing operational risks.

Key Findings from the General Membership Survey

The General Membership Survey aimed to explore individual perfusionists' professional experiences, future career plans, and challenges they face in their roles. Key findings include:

- Retirement and Career Mobility:

- 12% of respondents indicated they plan to retire in the next 1-2 years, with an additional 12% planning to retire in 3-5 years.
- Notably, 8% of perfusionists have retired and then returned to the workforce, highlighting the cyclical nature of staffing gaps.
- 28% hold graduate degrees, increasing their ability to transition into non-clinical roles or explore alternative career paths.
- A significant 38% of perfusionists aged 40 or younger indicated their intent to leave the profession in the coming years.

- Locum Work:

- 32% of perfusionists have participated in locum work within Canada, demonstrating a trend toward temporary or freelance roles to fill in gaps in service delivery.

- Work-Life Balance:

- 25% reported difficulties setting appropriate boundaries between work and personal life.
- 54% feel unsupported by their administration, which likely contributes to workplace dissatisfaction and stress.

- Work-Related Stress and Health Impacts:

- 74% of perfusionists reported experiencing four or more of the following work-related issues in the week they completed the survey:
 - Skipping meals
 - Eating poorly balanced meals
 - Working through day/night shifts without a break
 - Arriving home late from work
 - Experiencing difficulty sleeping or sleeping less than 5 hours
 - Changing personal or family plans due to work
 - Feeling frustrated by technology

Compensation and Staffing Struggles

While 44% of respondents reported an increase in compensation in the past year, this has not alleviated the core issues of staffing shortages, work-life balance challenges, or administrative support.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the 2024 surveys expose several critical pain points within the field of clinical perfusion in Canada, including:

1. Staffing Crisis:

- The current and predicted vacancies, combined with the alarming number of perfusionists planning to retire or leave the profession, suggest that Canadian perfusion centers are facing an unsustainable workforce crisis.

2. Workforce Retention:

- More needs to be done to retain existing staff, particularly young perfusionists, many of whom are considering leaving the profession. The absence of an N+1 model in many centers, compounded by stress and burnout, is likely contributing to this trend.

3. Support and Well-being:

- The surveys highlight the strain that work demands place on perfusionists' health and well-being. Solutions to enhance administrative support and provide better work-life balance mechanisms are crucial to improving retention and job satisfaction.

4. Strategic Workforce Planning:

- Immediate steps are necessary to address current vacancies, alongside long-term strategies to manage future attrition rates, including potential recruitment efforts, education incentives, and policies to encourage retirees to return to the field.

By taking action on these findings, the CSCP can foster a more supportive and sustainable environment for clinical perfusionists, helping to mitigate the growing staffing shortages and improve the overall quality of patient care across Canada.

Acknowledgments

The CSCP would like to thank all the survey respondents for their participation and valuable insights. This white paper aims to serve as a foundation for ongoing discussions and initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges facing the Canadian clinical perfusion workforce in 2024 and beyond.

This white paper was produced by the Canadian Society of Clinical Perfusion in October 2024. For more information or inquiries, please contact info@cscp.ca.