

The Pains of Privatization

How contracting out hurts health support workers, their families, and health care

by Jane Stinson, Nancy Pollak and Marcy Cohen

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office | April 2005

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

In order to maintain your anonymity I will not ask your name or any information that can identify you personally. The questions relate mainly to conditions of your work and your health. A few questions are also asked your family life as it relates to your work and health. I want to remind you that you can decline to answer any question or stop this interview at any time.

Do you have any questions first? Are you ready to start?

Background

1. What is your job title?
2. Briefly, what do you do at work?
3. Do you work in a hospital or long term care facility? H 70.8%; LTC 25%; Both 4.2%
4. Do you work at different job sites? (Probe re working at different facilities, and on different floors or units in the same facility)
 - a. Work in different facilities? Yes 4.2%; Not at all 91.7%; Other 4.2%
 - b. Work on different floors or units? Not at all 29.2%; Occasionally (every month or two) 12.5%; Frequently (every week or two) 58.3%
5. How long have you worked for your present employer? Number of months
6. Aside from your job at this facility, do you presently work for any other employer?
 - a. No, I work only with this employer 54.2%
 - b. Yes I currently work here and at ONE other job 25.0%
 - c. Yes, I currently work here and at MORE THAN ONE other job 16.7%
 - d. Not applicable (unemployed) 4.2%If yes, what do you do?

7. Approximately how many hours do you work per week for the subcontractor?

8. Do your working hours vary from week to week? a) Yes 16.8%, b) No 83.3%
If yes: a) Never 83.3%, b) Seldom 4.2% c) Sometimes 4.2% d) Often 4.2% e) Always 4.2%, Comments:

8.1 Are you satisfied with your hours of work? a) Yes 37.5%, b) No 50%, c) No comment 12.5%

There have been a lot of changes for hospital workers in British Columbia these days with the contracting out of support services such as cleaning, laundry and food services.

9. How would you describe how these changes have affected you?

Changes in Employment Relations

10. Did you lose your job as a result of your work being sub-contracted? a) Yes 41.7%, b) No 58.3%. If no, go to question #16

11. How long had you worked for the hospital/long term care facility before your job was contracted out? (Note specific # of years) (Responses only pertain to those who lost their job to contracting out.)

- a) 2 years or less (recent employee) 11.1%
- b) over 2 to 10 year (medium term) 66.6%
- c) over 10 years(long term) 22.2%

12. If yes: How did the loss of your job affect you emotionally? (more irritable, nervous, happy)

13. If yes: Did the loss of your job affect you physically? How? (unable to sleep, more energy)

14. Has the work you do at the hospital changed since the sub-contractor took over the service? (Or: Has your work changed since the subcontractor took over the service?)

a) Yes 33%, b) No 8.3%, If yes, How?

If yes, what change in your work do you think is the most important (possible responses, not to be read: workload, work tasks, work organization, other)

15. Do you think the quality of the service you provide has been affected?

a) Yes, b) No - %s not available since replies are only from a portion of respondents

If yes, what do you think is the most important change that affects quality? (Potential probes/responses. Not to be read out: workload too heavy, inadequate/better training, more/less commitment to quality, etc.)

Workload

16. In general, do you have enough time to get your work done?

a) Yes 29.2%, b) 62.5%, Can't code 8.3%

17. Do you feel you have too much work to do, too little or it's about right for the hours you are paid?

a) Too much 79.2% b) Varies 12.5%, c) Other 8.3%

18. Are you are too rushed to work safely? (Clarification: Do you hurry to get your work done and risk having an accident or injury?)

a) Never 12.5%, b) Seldom 8.3%, c) Sometimes 29.2%, d) Often 16.7%, e) Always 33.3%

19. In the last month, how often have you worked short-staffed – without the full number of employees on shift?

a) Never 16.7%, b) Seldom 0, c) Sometimes 16.7%, d) Often 25%, e) Always 37.5%, f) Don't know 4.2%

20. How do you respond to the following statement: My employer, the contractor, employs enough staff to provide good quality service. (*Probe if necessary to clarify for coding*)

a) strongly agree 8.3%, b) agree 16.7%, c) neither agree or disagree 0%, d) disagree 37.5%, e) strongly disagree 37.5%.

21. How would you rate the physical demands of your job, on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 as very light demands and 7 as very heavy demands.

1- 0%, 2 – 0%, 3 – 4.2%, 4 – 4.2%, 5 – 20.8%, 6 – 20.8%, 7 – 50%.

Work Stress

(Job strain, job insecurity and supervisor support questions same as Statistics Canada National Population Health Survey 1994-95, 1996-99 and Community Care Health Survey, 2002.)

The next few questions are about your current job. I'm going to read you a series of statements that might describe your health care job since you started working for the contractor. Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree.

Note to interviewers: Encourage interviewees to explain why they feel that way, partly to get fuller understanding. Very important if responses are not logically consistent.

Job Strain

22. Your job requires that you learn new things* (new work tasks, skills, opportunity for growth)

Strongly Agree 20.8%, Agree 20.8%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 37.5%, Strongly Disagree 16.7%.

23. Your job requires a high level of skill*

Strongly Agree 41.7%, Agree 20.8%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 29.2%, Strongly Disagree 4.2%

24. Your job allows you freedom to decide how you do your job*

(Clarification: Your job gives you choice over how and when to do things)

Strongly Agree 20.8%, Agree 37.5%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 20.8%, Strongly Disagree 16.7%.

25. Your job requires that you do the same things over and over (eg/ repetitive tasks)

Strongly Agree 45.8%, Agree 29.2%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 8.3%, Strongly Disagree 12.5%.

26. Your job is very hectic*(busy)

Strongly Agree 79.2%, Agree 20.8%, Neither Agree or Disagree 0, Disagree 0, Strongly Disagree 0.

27. You are free from conflicting demands that others make. (Clarification: You are not in a situation where one person tells you to do one thing or do it one way and another person tells you to do something different.)

Strongly Agree 8.3%, Agree 25%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 50%, Strongly Disagree 12.5%.

28. You have a lot to say about what happens in your job* (Clarification: You have the ability to influence decisions and choices)

Strongly Agree 12.5%, Agree 20.8%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 37.5%, Strongly Disagree 25%.

29. Your job requires a lot of physical

Strongly Agree 83.3%, Agree 16.7%, Neither Agree or Disagree 0, Disagree 0, Strongly Disagree 0.

30. You are exposed to hostility or conflict from the people you work with.

(Clarification: You feel that (some) co-workers are unkind, mean or uncooperative with you, get angry at you, or you feel caught in the middle of other peoples' conflicts)

Strongly Agree 29.2%, Agree 29.2%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 33.3%, Strongly Disagree 4.2%.

* *reverse score*

Job security

31. Your job security is good.

Strongly Agree 4.2%, Agree 12.5%, Neither Agree or Disagree 0, Disagree 20.8%, Strongly Disagree 62.5%.

Supervisor Support

32. Your supervisor is helpful in getting he work done

Strongly Agree 8.7%, Agree 17.4%, Neither Agree or Disagree 13%, Disagree 34.8%, Strongly Disagree 26.1%.

33. Your supervisor does not respect and appreciate the work that you do*

Strongly Agree 21.7%, Agree 17.4%, Neither Agree or Disagree 26.1%, Disagree 17.4%, Strongly Disagree 17.4%.

34. Your supervisor is willing to listen to the problems you have with your work assignment.

Strongly Agree 16.7%, Agree 25%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.2%, Disagree 29.2%, Strongly Disagree 25%.

35. Your supervisor does not take steps to deal with these problems*

Strongly Agree 34.8%, Agree 39.1%, Neither Agree or Disagree 4.3%, Disagree 13%, Strongly Disagree 8.7%.

36. Your supervisor is supportive if you need to take time off work because of family responsibilities.

Strongly Agree 4.3%, Agree 52.2%, Neither Agree or Disagree 13%, Disagree 17.4%, Strongly Disagree 13%.

37. You are reluctant to take time off work when you are sick or injured because of what your supervisor might say or do *

Strongly Agree 20.8%, Agree 20.8%, Neither Agree or Disagree 8.3%, Disagree 41.7%, Strongly Disagree 8.3%.

38. If you are injured on the job, your supervisor will support you in a caring way.

Strongly Agree 8.3%, Agree 29.2%, Neither Agree or Disagree 25%, Disagree 20.8%, Strongly Disagree 16.7%.

39. Has your supervisor changed since you started working with the contractor?

(If yes, is there frequent turnover of supervisors?) Yes 54.2%, No 45.8%.

40. If yes, has that affected your work situation? Yes 75%, No 25%. (only of those who replied yes.) If yes, How?

Skip #41 for new hires, not previously directly employed by a facility.

41. In general, how would you compare the supervision provided by the contractor to the supervision that we had when you worked directly for a facility?

a. Better 0, b. Worse 90.9%, c. About the same 9.1%.

Support from Other Staff

We are interested to know about the support you get from the Other Staff on the Unit or floors where you work (the people you work with who are employed directly by the facility ie. the unit coordinators, ward aides, nurses, etc.)

Explain: I am now going to read a few more statements and ask you to indicate if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree.

Note to interviewers: Encourage explanations, as above.

(Note these questions may not apply to the dietary workers)

42. You feel isolated from the nurses, care aides and other staff on the unit.

Strongly Agree 25%, Agree 12.5%, Neither Agree or Disagree 8.3%, Disagree 29.2%, Strongly Disagree 25%.

43. The people on the unit/floor appreciate and respect the work that you do.

Strongly Agree 45.8%, Agree 25%, Neither Agree or Disagree 12.5%, Disagree 12.5%, Strongly Disagree 4.2%.

Skip #44 for new hires, not previously employed by a facility.

44. In general how would you compare the working relationship you have now with the people on your unit/floor to the working relationship on your unit/floor prior to contracting out?

Support from Co-workers

We would also like to know about the support you get from your immediate co-workers, those who also work for the contractor. Here are a few more statements asking for your response, from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Note to interviewers: Encourage explanations, as above.

45. Your co-workers appreciate and respect the work that you do.

Strongly Agree 37.5%, Agree 33.3%, Neither Agree or Disagree 12.5%, Disagree 8.3%, Strongly Disagree 8.3%.

46. You feel isolated from your co-workers (emotionally isolated, don't get help from others)

Strongly Agree 12.5%, Agree 8.3%, Neither Agree or Disagree 0, Disagree 29.2%, Strongly Disagree 50%.

47. It is hard to get to know my co-workers because there is frequent turn over. Strongly Agree 21.7%, Agree 8.7%, Neither Agree or Disagree 0, Disagree 52.2%, Strongly Disagree 17.4%.

48. If frequent turnover of co-workers, ask: How has that affected you?

Racism in the Workplace

48.1 Do you or have you experienced racism in your workplace? Yes No

Note: Results not tabulated since question not always asked.

If yes, can you tell me about this? What happened?

(Probe to clarify who acts in a racist way – other workers, patients/residents, supervisors)

48.2 If yes, does your supervisor help to resolve racist incidents in the workplace?

Yes No If yes, how? Results not tabulated.

Skills and Training

49. Did you receive TRAINING from the contractor prior to starting your current job?

Yes 95.8%, No 4.2%.

If Yes, what kind of training was it? (Explanation of what it covered. Who provided it - supervisor, co-workers, sent to training course(s), etc.)

Skip #50 if new hire, not previously employed directly by a facility.

50. How does the training the contractor provides compare with the training you used to get from the facility?

Better 0, About the same 9.1%, Worse 90.9%.

Please explain why.

51. Have you been involved in providing training to your co-workers with no previous experience in health care? Yes 66.7%, No 33.3%.

If yes, What kind of training have you provided?

(Probe if provided at supervisors request or at worker's initiative)

52. Do you do currently do work for which you are not trained? Yes 39.1%, No 60.9%.

(If yes, please explain what type of work)

53. Do you get explanations about tasks which you are asked to do? (eg/ why it is important to clean in a certain way) Yes 45.8%, No 54.2%.

(Probe for elaboration here)

54. Are there opportunities to discuss problems related to training or new work methods with your supervisor? (i.e. How to improve what you're doing ?) Yes 54.2%, No 45.8%.

55. Are there opportunities to deal with problems related to training or new work methods through your union? (Probe for elaboration here. Possible response, not to be read: eg/ in/active union presence in workplace, not/afraid of taking problems to union, union not/seen as effective at resolving problems) Yes 8.3%, No 87.5%.

Work Schedule

(Ask as these questions as open-ended. Probe if necessary to clarify for coding.)

56. How is your work schedule decided?

- a. The schedule is decided entirely by my supervisor/employer and I have no choice 63.6%.
- b. My manager/employer decides on the schedule, but I am able to make minor changes 18.2%.
- c. My manager/employer decides on the schedule, but it is flexible and I can make changes that make my work times more convenient 9.1%.
- d. I plan with my manager/employer to work at times that fit in with my own schedule and also meet my manager's/employer's needs 9.1%.

57. What effect does your work schedule have on your other responsibilities and needs that fall outside of your paid work (for example at home or in the community)?

- a. My work schedule fits in very well with my other responsibilities and needs 20.8%
- b. My work schedule fits well with my other responsibilities and needs 25%
- c. My work schedule fits in fairly well, but sometimes causes problems 8.3%
- d. My work schedule often causes problems with my other responsibilities and needs 37.5%
- e. My work schedule makes it very difficult for me to take care of other responsibilities and needs 8.3%.

58. Does your work schedule cause problems with meeting your family responsibilities and needs? Yes 52.2%, No 47.8%.

If Yes, what kinds of problems do you have? What kind of things get pushed aside/altered?

Patient/Resident Contact

59. Do you have time to interact with patients in the course of your work?

(Ask as open-ended. Probe if necessary to clarify for coding.)

- a. Never 33.3%, b. Sometimes 54.2%, c. Always 12.5%.

Skip #60 if new hire, not previously employed directly by a facility.

60. How does your time for patient contact compare to when you worked directly for the hospital/long term care facility? (Ask as open-ended. Probe if necessary to clarify for coding.) Better 10%, About the same 10%, Worse 80%.

Please explain why?

61. Would you like more time to interact with patients in the course of your work?
Yes 62.5%, No 37.5%. Why?

Job Satisfaction

This next section is about job satisfaction. I will read you a few statements that may describe how you feel about your job since you started working with the contractor. Please tell me if you feel this way never, seldom, some of the time, most of the time, always or you don't know.

62. You do a lot of worthwhile things in this job. (Clarification: You make an important contribution to the hospital/LTC)
Never 4.2%, Seldom 0, Sometimes 12.5%, Most of the time 25%, Always 58.3%, Don't know 0.
Why?

63. You feel good about being part of a health care team
Never 8.3%, Seldom 8.3%, Sometimes 12.5%, Most of the time 29.2%, Always 41.7%.
Don't know 0.
Why?

64. In the next six months, do you have plans to leave your position?
Yes 41.7%, No 37.5%, Don't know 12.5%, No reply 8.3%.

65. How satisfied are you with your job?
(Ask as open-ended. Probe if necessary to clarify for coding.)
Very satisfied 0, Somewhat satisfied 41.7%, Not too satisfied 29.2%, Not at all satisfied 29.2%.

Health Impacts

66. In general how would you describe your health?
(Ask as open-ended. Probe if necessary to clarify for coding.)
Poor 16.7%, Fair 20.8%, Good 25%, Very Good 33.3%, Excellent 4.2%.

67. Does your current job affect your physical health? Yes 83.3%, No 16.7%.
How?

68. Does the job affect your emotional or spiritual health? Yes 75%, No 25%.
If yes: How?

69. Have you ever gotten sick or injured in your current job? Yes 62.5%, No 37.5%
(If no, Go to question 74)

70. If yes, what type of pain, injury or illness have you suffered as a result of your job? (Circle all those that apply) No tabulation here given multiple responses.

a. Back injury, b. legs/arm/head pain/injury, c. Stress, d. Infections or viruses, e. Other illness or injury (please specify).

71. Have you taken time off work related to the above injuries/illness?

Yes 47.4%. If yes, how much time (specify # of days or weeks). No 52.6%

Comments:

72. Was this illness or injury a result of inadequate training or lack of information about how to work safely on your job? Yes 23.5%, No 76.5%. Please explain.

73. Did this health problem affect other parts of your life? (Social activities, housework, exercise; relations with family, etc.) (Try to get examples of affects and probe to clarify response for coding as below). Yes, limited a lot 50%, Yes, limited a little 33.3%, No, not limited at all 16.7%.

Skip for new hires, not previously employed directly by a facility.

74. Do you think you are more or less likely to be injured or get sick now as compared to when you worked directly for the hospital/long term care centre?

(Ask as open-ended. Probe if necessary to clarify for coding.)

More likely 54.5%, About the same 45.5%, Less likely 0.

Please explain why

75. What causes you to feel stress at work? (Define stress/how it manifests itself; dealing with difficult situations, unreasonable deadlines, unclear duties; no autonomy/control, no feedback, conflict with co-workers, supervisor, unfair payment for the work that you do)

(Probe as to the three most important stressors)

76. How do you feel when you are under stress at work? (How does stress manifest itself?) (More irritable, more emotional, quieter, work harder, think "I can't take it anymore")

Work and Family Life

77. How does this job affect your family responsibilities? (What you do, how you manage work-home overflow, job (in)flexibility, social relations)

78. Does this job affect your social and community life? (Visiting friends, relatives, being involved in social and community activities). Yes 87.5%, No 12.5%

If Yes, please tell me about the areas that are influenced.

79. Does your family have an impact on your paid work? (Family provides support/pressure, helps me/doesn't help deal with problems at work, family

responsibilities mean insufficient personal time/others taking on family responsibilities makes it easier for me to work) Yes 86.4%, No 13.6%.

If Yes, please explain

Extrinsic Benefits

(need to note if they have spouse and/or children)

Please respond to the following statement by indicating if you Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, or Strongly Disagree.

80. Your income adequate for you and/or your family? (Considering effort, benefits, sick leave) Strongly Agree 0, Moderately Agree 4.2%, Moderately Disagree 12.5%, Strongly Disagree 83.3%.

Explanation/comments

IF SINGLE GO TO QUESTION 82

81. Does your income from this job affect your children? Yes 83.3%, No 16.7%.
How?

82. Does your income from this job affect your partner/spouse and/or extended family? Yes 90%, No 10%. How?

For all:

83. How does your income from this job affect other parts of your life (i.e. schooling, housing, recreation)?

Questions about Future

84.1 What are your hopes and fears about your work situation? (i.e. desirable/undesirable change in my work situation)

84.2 What are the most important things that would help improve your health and well-being? (More secure income, job change, more time with family/friends, learning to relax more/worry less) (No more than three)

85. Thinking about the issues we've just been talking about, what, if anything, do you think your union can do about them?

86.1 How would your union be most effective in addressing problems at work?

86.2 Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions and share your experiences through this research project.

Demographics

(Try to fill this out prior to the interviews)

1. Age

2. Visible Minority Yes 75%, No 25%.

3. Ethnic Origin:

a) South East Asian (including East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan) 25%,
b) Filipino 41.7%, c) Canadian 8.3%, d) English 8.3%, e) Chinese 0, f) Other 16.7%
please specify.

4. a) Born in Canada Yes No

b) If no, year you came to Canada

5. Current Marital Status: a) Single 25%, b) Married/Common Law 45%, c)
Divorced/Separated 29.2%.

6. Single Parent: Yes No

If not single parent:

7. I have a partner/spouse who: a) works: Full-time 70%, b) works Part-time
0, c) works as a Casual 20%, d) is Unemployed 10%.

8. I have a partner/spouse who:

a) has a job with a pension Yes 9.1%, No 72.7%, Don't know 18.2%.

b) has a job with extended health benefits Yes 27.3%, No 72.7%.

9. Our monthly family income is approximately

10. I/we support one or more children. Yes 75%, No 25%.

11. I/we support a dependent adult Yes 30.4%, No 69.6%.

12. Highest level of education completed

a) Grade school (please specify which grade) 4.2%,

b) High School (please specify which grade) 20.8%,

c) Community College Certificate 58.3%,

d) University undergraduate degree 4.2%,

e) Other (please specify) 12.5%.

Does this include any health care training? If yes, in what?

13. Highest level of education completed in a country other than Canada
- a). Grade school (please specify which grade)
 - b). High School_(please specify which grade)
 - c). Community College Diploma
 - d). University undergraduate degree
 - e) Graduate degree
 - f). other (please specify)

Does this include any health care training ? If yes, in what?

Sources

This interview schedule draws on questions used in:

Armstrong, Pat and Irene Jensen. "Burned out and tired: The impact of restructuring and work reorganization on workers in long term care." National Networks on Environments in Women's Health, and Canadian Union of Public Employees. February 2004.

McDonough, Peggy. "Front-line staff survey: Work, health and well-being." University of Toronto, Research Services Unit, Department of Public Health Sciences, nd.

Statistics Canada. "Canadian Community Health Survey. Cycle 1.2, Mental Health and Well-being." 2002.