

# Factors influencing female doctors' career decisions at Tshwane District Hospital, Pretoria

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**Abstract** (Full text available online at [www.tandfonline.com/ojfp](http://www.tandfonline.com/ojfp))

S Afr Fam Pract 2015; DOI: 10.1080/20786190.2014.976971

**Introduction:** Most doctors at Tshwane District Hospital in Pretoria are women who experience difficulty combining a career with family responsibilities because of lack of flexitime or part-time posts. They are also frustrated by the hospital management's apparent indifference to their concerns. Consequently, female doctors tend to leave Tshwane District to pursue their careers elsewhere. This study explored factors that influence the career choices of female doctors at Tshwane District Hospital in Pretoria.

**Method:** Of sixty-two doctors working at Tshwane District Hospital in Pretoria between January 2008 and July 2011, 47 were traced, and 28 completed a four-part, self-administered questionnaire constructed round eight themes that emerged from a focus group discussion involving six female doctors. Questions on levels of burnout and job satisfaction, based on existing validated questionnaires, were included. Of the 28 doctors who completed the questionnaire, 19 were female and nine male. The median age group was 30–39 years.

**Results:** Forty-six per cent of doctors reported overall job satisfaction. Female doctors were less satisfied than male doctors. Sixty-four per cent reported symptoms of burnout, while a worrying 18% reported either persisting symptoms or complete burnout. The majority of female doctors would prefer to work flexitime and to have the option of part-time employment in an academically stimulating environment. Many of the doctors who participated in the study at Tshwane District Hospital plan to pursue their careers outside the public sector in order to balance their family responsibilities with their professional lives.

**Conclusion:** Female doctors at Tshwane District Hospital reported having low job satisfaction, an inflexible work schedule, a heavy workload and being given little recognition for their contribution. Together, these factors probably account for the high turnover of doctors at Tshwane District Hospital. If doctor retention is to be improved in public sector facilities, such as Tshwane District Hospital, the particular needs of female doctors with family responsibilities must be addressed.

**Keywords:** burnout, family responsibilities, female doctors, flexitime, focus groups, professional