



Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association COVID-19 'Pulse Check' Survey

Data Insights

June 2021

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APNA 2021 COVID Pulse Check # 2 survey data

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Summary

A series of APNA COVID Pulse Check surveys have been undertaken with primary health care nurses since the start of the pandemic. This is the sixth survey in this series and highlights that primary health care nurses are playing a key role in providing education to patients about vaccine hesitancy and potential side effects. These conversations are most commonly nurse-initiated when providing routine patient care.

Compared to the previous April APNA pulse check survey, the data suggests a decline in the utilisation of the primary health care nursing workforces' full breadth of knowledge and skills. Given the current challenges facing the health system, it is of significant concern that more than a quarter of nurse respondents indicate they could do more in their current roles.

It is essential that Governments and employers better understand a primary health care nurses scope of practice and remove barriers to optimal utilisation. Better utilisation of this workforce is a long-standing issue and requires immediate attention to enhance the vaccination roll-out now and population health outcomes in the future.

Key Data Insights

Vaccine education and hesitancy

A sample survey of the largest workforce in primary health care, shows that primary health care nurses involved in the vaccine rollout are:

- Playing a significant role in providing education to patients about vaccine hesitancy (88%) and potential side effects (77%).
- Taking the opportunity to initiate discussions with patients about vaccine hesitancy and potential side effects as part of their routine patient care (75.2%).

Vaccine hesitancy has moved from being ranked **fourth** (COVID-19 PulseCheck survey April 2021) to **first** (COVID-19 PulseCheck survey June 2021) as the main issue impacting nurses in relation to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

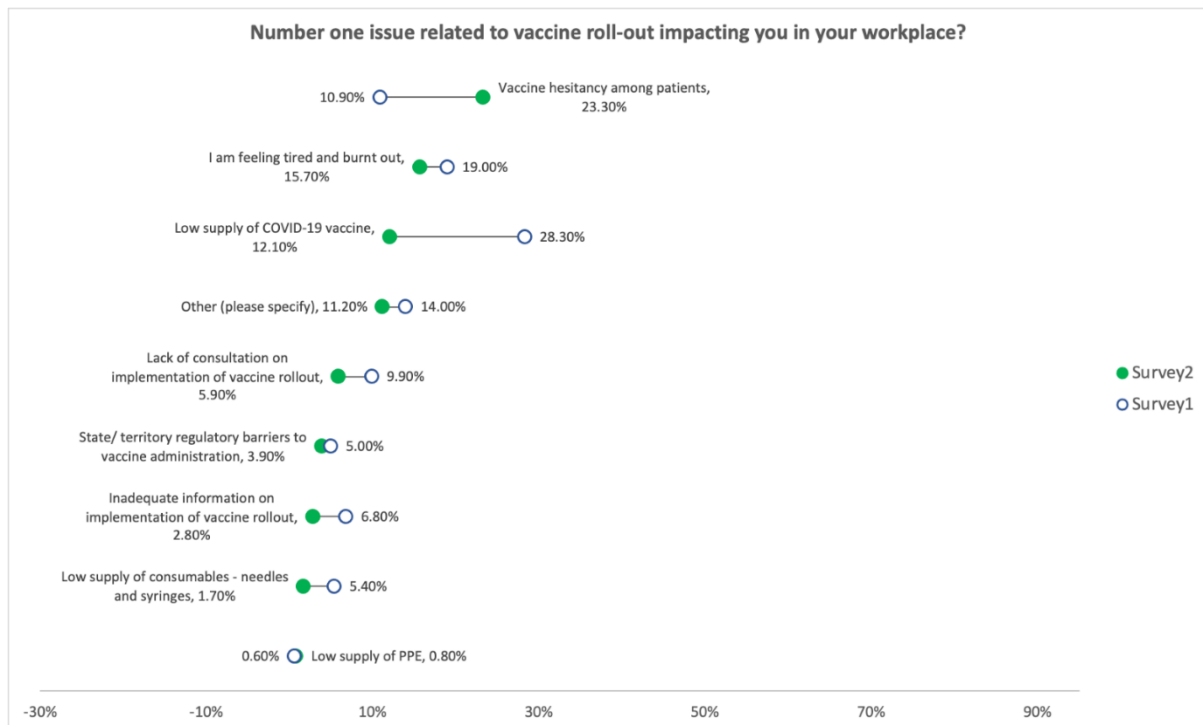


Figure 1 – Main issue related to vaccine roll-out in workplace, Survey 1 vs. Survey 2

Nurses also report that patients’ number one concern relates to potential side-effects (Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome) from the vaccine (86%) with other concerns relating to a lack of vaccine, limited options, patients requesting the Pfizer vaccine and a lack of testing.

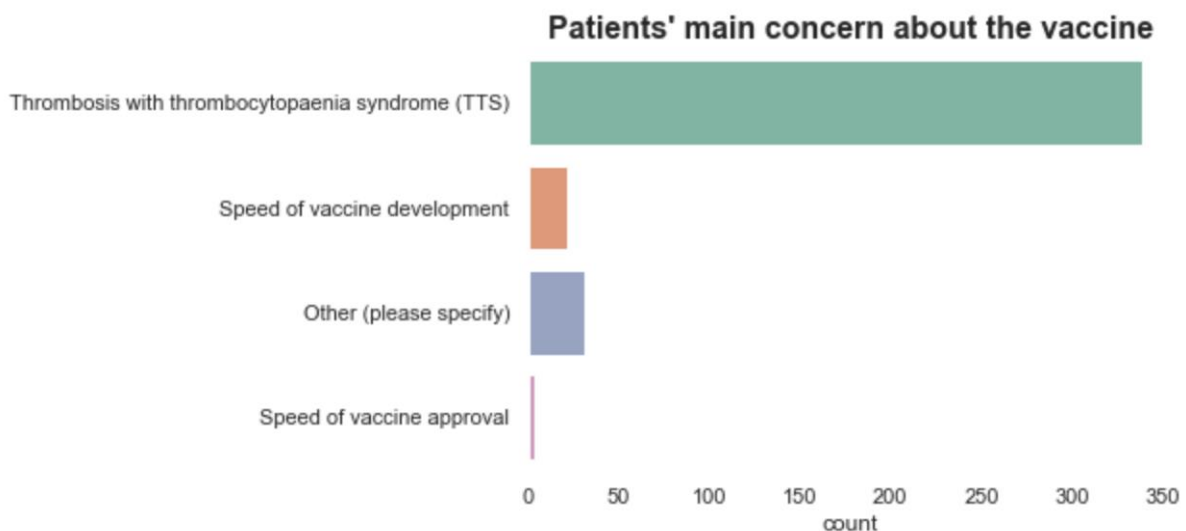


Figure 2 – Patients’ main concern about the vaccine

The data highlights that primary health care nurses continue to play a key educational role with the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, with the majority providing education opportunistically as part of routine care.

Nurse utilisation

The survey also found that:

- The proportion of nurses who feel that they are regularly or often practicing to the full extent of their professional knowledge and skills is almost **29% lower** than in the COVID-19 PulseCheck survey April 2021.
- More than a quarter of nurses felt that often or most of the time they could do more with their professional skills and knowledge (28%).
- Increased workload and administrative burdens are contributing towards a decrease in “Preventative health and screening activities” (35% less activity since April 2021) and “Chronic disease and healthy ageing management” (33% less activity since April 2021) work undertaken by nurses.
- A lack of staff in the workplace had been compounded by nurses switching to higher-paid contracts in mass vaccination hubs.

“For a nurse with my clinical experience and post-grad study there is limited scope of advancement and very tired of poor rates of pay” - nurse respondent.

Do you believe that your education, training and qualifications were used to the full extent during the last month?

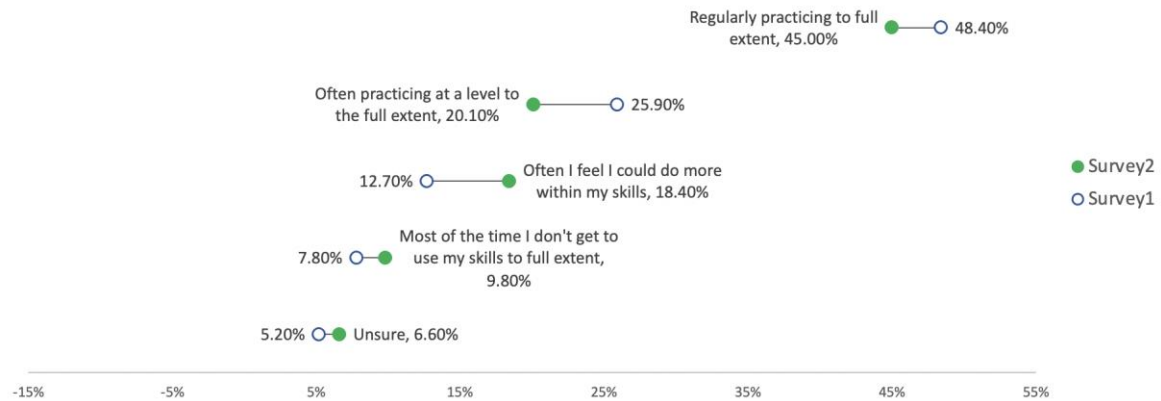


Figure 3 – Use of nurses’ education, training and qualifications

The data reveals that primary health care nurses could be better utilised during the pandemic and vaccination roll out. It also signals concerns around retention of the workforce and the ability to adequately provide routine patient care.

About the survey:

- The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) undertook a sample survey (COVID-19 Pulse Check #2) of primary health care nurses between Wednesday, 2 June and Wednesday, 16 June 2021.
- The survey sought feedback from nurses on the impact of the pandemic on their work, and their views in relation to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.
- Primary health care nurses are the largest workforce in primary health care with more than 89,000 nurses working in many clinical settings including general practice, correctional care, community health, aged care and schools.