

# An Analysis of the Healthcare Staffing Shortage at Glenmore Lodge Care Community

For: Jennifer Gillingham

Executive Director at Sienna Senior Living

Toronto, Ontario

By: Amy Vergouwen

ENGL 301 Student

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# ANALYSIS OF GLENMORE LODGE STAFFING SHORTAGE

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### ABSTRACT

Glenmore Lodge Care Community, located in Kelowna, BC, is a long-term care facility owned by Sienna Senior Living offering continual day and night support to seniors with dementia and other disabilities. With the complex level of care necessary, many long-term care facilities are finding themselves in a healthcare staffing shortage, Glenmore Lodge included.

Employees at Glenmore Lodge were asked to provide their thoughts about this staffing shortage in the form of survey questions and more formal interview questions, and the top reasons cited for the lack of staff were challenging patients/job difficulty, inadequate pay, and better healthcare jobs elsewhere. Hourly wages for healthcare aides were found to be lower at Glenmore Lodge. Despite job difficulties, healthcare workers were found to generally enjoy their jobs.

Recommendations are offered to the care facility in an attempt to provide feasible and practical solutions to alleviate the negative impacts of the staffing shortage. Short-term solutions include removing daily desserts and weekly ice cream parlour events and modifying to occur slightly less frequently. Long-term suggestions include hiring healthcare aide students and nursing students as volunteer healthcare support workers while they complete their programs, and host fundraising events to raise money for the healthcare departments at the care facility.

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is the Glenmore Lodge Care Community?**

Glenmore Lodge Care Community is one of many long-term care facilities located in Kelowna, British Columbia, providing continual daytime and nighttime care to seniors with varying levels of dementia and other disabilities. When individuals move into Glenmore Lodge, they typically reside at the care facility for the remainder of their lives. Because of this, level of care and support required for the residents is very intense, as some of the residents are nonverbal, some unable to walk, and some possess complicated medical conditions. The majority of the residents at Glenmore Lodge suffer from varying levels of dementia, from early-onset to the end-stage of dementia.

### **Level of care provided in long-term care facilities**

Long-term care facilities are the most hands-on form of seniors home available in the country. Types of seniors housing in Canada vary from independent retirement living, to long-term care facilities, sometimes known as residential care homes. Independent retirement living typically consists of age restricted communities (55+, for example), and are intended for seniors who do not suffer from dementia, but want the ease of condominium living or housing specifically designed for seniors. Assisted living consists of accommodation and daily help with small tasks such as housekeeping, laundry, personal grooming, and also offer activities and access to healthcare providers. Often, seniors who have been recently diagnosed with early signs of dementia but are still able to function normally are placed in assisted living to prepare for the future. Memory care wings are often available in assisted living facilities to provide support and help to seniors who are prone to wandering. After all of these housing options are considered, long-term care facilities are available for seniors who are unable to take care of themselves

properly and require 24/7 support. A large number of the individuals at long-term care facilities have dementia and will remain at the facilities for the rest of their days.

### **What is the present problem?**

The complex care and support required for residents at Glenmore Lodge is profuse. Currently at Glenmore Lodge there is a healthcare staffing shortage and is limiting the available support for residents. This problem is apparent in many long-term care facilities across Canada. In British Columbia, the “proposed” necessary amount of care per resident is 3.36 hours a day, yet 81% of care facilities are not reaching this number (Darryl Plecas, 6).

### **What is the purpose of this report?**

This report aims to address the healthcare staffing shortages at Glenmore Lodge Care Community, and attempt to provide reasonable and manageable suggestions and recommendations that could be implemented to alleviate the consequences of the shortage. The care and wellbeing of the residents is the number one priority, thus, the main goal of this report is to find small and feasible ways to help support the residents best.

### **What data sources are used in this report?**

This report contains primary data and secondary data. Primary data will include surveys from healthcare staff, as well as interview data from managers. Secondary data will include outside sources such as academic literature, provincial and federal government documents, and news sources.

### **Scope of this inquiry**

The scope of inquiry will be to assess the possibility and likelihood of finding small and practical ways to lessen the consequences of the staffing shortage at the Glenmore Lodge.

## DATA SECTION

### **Overview of Glenmore Lodge Care Community**

Glenmore Lodge Care Community only recently opened its doors winter of 2017, and offers one hundred publicly funded beds, and eighteen privately funded beds (Interior Health, 1). The long-term care facility was built with the residents wellbeing in mind, as the facility is set up in neighborhoods with living rooms and dining rooms to limit similarities to a hospital. Daily programs offered at the care facility range from music therapy to target practice games, arts and crafts, singalongs, and visits to the ice cream parlour. Residents can even get their haircut done in the care facility. Glenmore Lodge was built to meet every need of each resident, especially the complex care needs.

#### *The role and importance of care staff at Glenmore Lodge*

Glenmore offers care and support twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, which includes daily bathing, grooming, feeding, access to a team of complex care workers (registered nurses, licenced nurses, healthcare aides, dietician, social worker, occupational and physiotherapist) and a team of recreation therapists. Many residents at the care facility are not able walk on their own, use the bathroom, or be cognisant to take their medications. Healthcare staff are required during every hour of the day at a long-term care facility like Glenmore Lodge.

### **Research on healthcare staffing around the country**

#### *Healthcare aides*

At Glenmore Lodge Care Community, healthcare aides are required to have completed a healthcare aide program with a focus in dementia care. Considering the schooling to become a healthcare aide, the pay is limited, averaging \$18.63 as the hourly wage (Indeed, 1). Comparing this wage to a current online advertisement for a long-term care facility healthcare aide position,

the wage offered at Glenmore Lodge is less per hour. Mission Creek Landing, another long-term care facility in Kelowna, are offering an hourly wage of \$19.33 for healthcare aides (Indeed, 1). Similarly, The Good Samaritan Society is offering \$22.13 an hour for a complex care healthcare aide (Indeed, 1). This monetary discussion sheds light on one possible reason Glenmore Lodge is lacking in healthcare staff, and below is a graph to represent this.

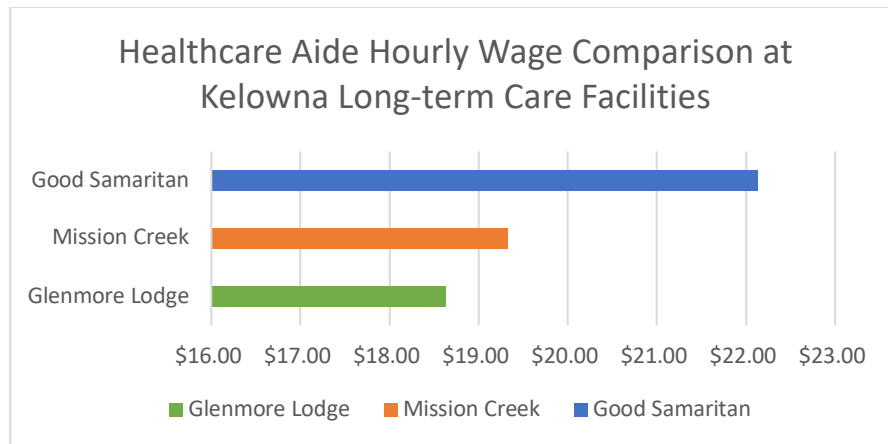


Figure 1. Healthcare aide wage comparison across Kelowna long-term care facilities

### *Literature Review*

Glenmore Lodge Care Community is not the only care facility having to deal with the consequences of inadequate numbers of healthcare staff. The Canadian Association for Retired Persons (CARP) paired up with AdvantAge Ontario to conduct a survey regarding healthcare staffing in long-term care. An overwhelming 92% of individuals who took the survey claimed that there are not enough healthcare staff to care for the residents in long-term care (1). Long-term care facilities and across the country and even across the continent are struggling to cope with the lack healthcare workers. Researchers from The University of Wisconsin spoke to a nurse aide who stated that their clinic is so short-staffed that nurse aides are forced to disregard many crucial or necessary steps in the care of residents, as there are simply not enough employees and not enough time to complete residents' care routine. The nurse aide lists not



properly brushing residents teeth, not allowing residents to walk or perform their exercises, and not chatting with residents as measures that are taken when they are understaffed (Bowers et al., 55). The Journal of Gerontological Nursing cites three main reasons for extremely rapid turnaround of nursing assistants in long-term care facilities (37):

- 1) Inadequate pay
- 2) Difficulty of the job
- 3) Feelings of underappreciation

## SURVEY DATA

### Healthcare aides

Collecting data from the healthcare staff was difficult. They are, as noted in this report, overworked and understaffed, so they were not willing to spend much time answering questions. Five healthcare aides were willing to give responses to the questions anonymously. All five care aides stated that yes, they do feel there is a staffing shortage at Glenmore Lodge, and yes, they have felt overworked due to the lack of staff. One employee stated, “I don’t like having to ask other departments for help, but I have to do it a lot. There aren’t enough of us for the amount of care the residents need.”

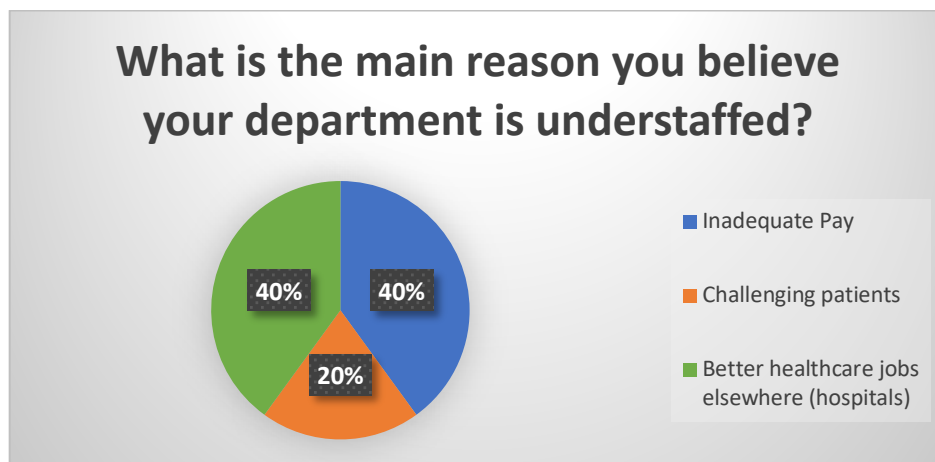


Figure 2. Healthcare aides opinion on reasoning behind staffing shortage

### *Observations*

Despite the difficulty of their jobs, dealing with challenging patients, receiving a low hourly wage and feeling overworked, healthcare aides at Glenmore Lodge were observed over the course of a month and had noticeably happy dispositions, and worked with smiles on their faces. When mentioning this to a care aide, their response was that they genuinely enjoy taking care of others, and enjoy spending time with residents when they can. It was noted that, despite the negative aspects of being a healthcare aide at a long-term care facility, all care aides mentioned that they were thankful for the position.

### *Proposed Solutions*

Healthcare aides were asked what their main suggestion would be to help alleviate some of the consequences of the staffing shortage. The healthcare aides unanimously agreed that the pay of the job must be upped in order to entice more healthcare aides to work at the care facility. One of the care aides stated that the recreation department at Glenmore Lodge was “thriving”, especially in comparison to the other departments. The following responses were noted as reasonable solutions.

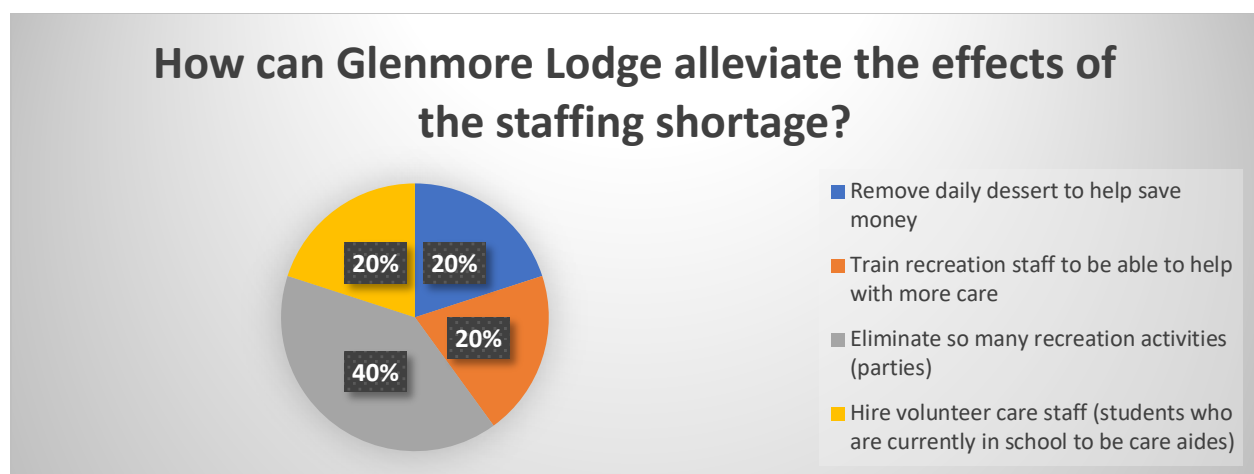


Figure 3. Proposed solutions from healthcare aides to the staffing issue

The most interesting response given was the solution of hiring students who are currently enrolled in school to become healthcare aides as volunteer care staff. This solution would be great for the care facility, as they are not required to pay but are receiving more staff, and is also beneficial to the volunteers, as they would be gaining valuable hands-on experience.

### *Nurses*

Registered and licensed nurses were not willing to participate in the survey. Reasons given were lack of time and disinterest in participating, therefore the feedback from healthcare workers is strictly from the care aides.

## **INTERVIEW DATA**

### **Recreation Therapy Staff**

The recreation therapy team at Glenmore Lodge is very well-staffed with a number of dedicated employees and a few volunteers who help out weekly. The recreation team were happy to share information and answers for the survey and interview. Four members of the team were willing to share their thoughts on this issue of understaffing in the healthcare departments. All three individuals agreed that there is a lack of healthcare staff at the care facility. One employee mirrored the statement of a healthcare aide, stating “We, the rec team, are often having to cut short our programs or immediately stop a game to go help out the care aides or the nurses. It is not their fault – there just aren’t enough of them. It is unfortunate though to have to cut programs short or cancel programs altogether because we have to go help feed breakfast, or help a resident use the washroom. It upsets the residents knowing they aren’t going to get to do their singing program that day.”

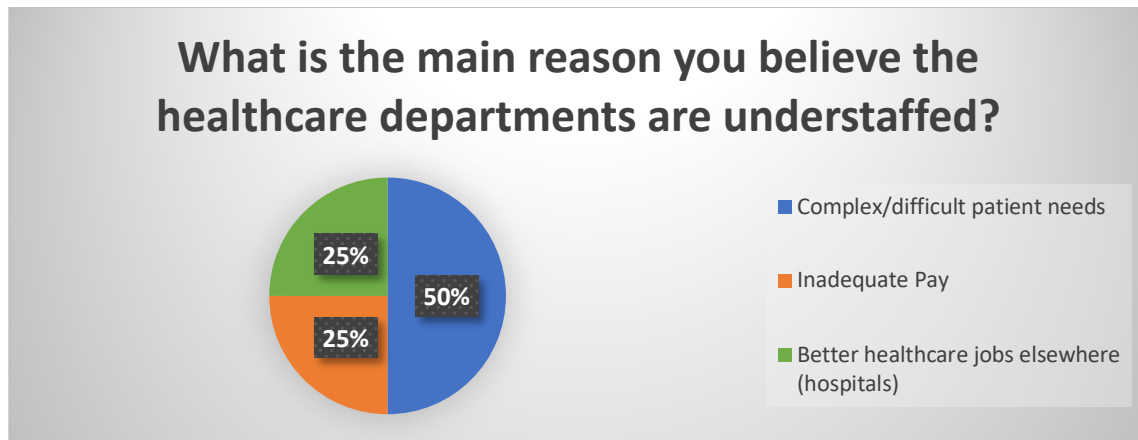


Figure 4. Recreation therapy staff's opinion on reasoning behind staffing shortage

### *Management*

To summarize, management employees of Glenmore Lodge communicated that they felt the healthcare aide and nursing sector of the care facility were lacking in staff the most. It was expressed throughout the interview process that there has not been a social worker at the care facility for over 5 months, meaning that the residents have not been able to get mental health help. The main reason stated for lack of social worker was inability to find any suitable candidates with correct schooling and experience. "Residents' wellbeing absolutely suffers when we don't have a strong and full team of healthcare professionals ready to serve them. Programs are cut short or have to be cancelled. Blood pressure is checked 20 minutes after it is supposed to be. It is unfair to the residents as they have done nothing wrong. The jobs here are not easy but they are rewarding. Unfortunately I think some healthcare providers don't see a long-term care facility as an appealing place to work, and would rather be at a hospital. We are trying our best, but as you know, care facilities across the country face the same problems we face with staffing shortages", states a manager at Glenmore Lodge. The overall healthcare staffing shortage started to become apparent to management within the last year specifically.

Management was informed of a suggestion provided by a healthcare aide, that is mentioned above. All management was in agreeance that hiring students enrolled in healthcare aide school or nursing school as volunteer healthcare support would be extremely beneficial. One manager stated that she believed fundraiser events involving the community every few months could be a way to bring in extra money to hire more healthcare staff. All management staff agreed that they have been able to see the consequences of the staffing shortage throughout the care facility.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

### **Short-term Suggestions**

- 1) Removing daily desserts. If cakes and pastries are not a crucial aspect of a senior's diet, removing daily desserts could aid the care facility quite a lot financially, as there are approximately one hundred residents. Desserts could still be served on weekends as treats, but discontinuing daily desserts may be beneficial.
- 2) Removing the twice weekly ice cream parlour. Again, as with removing the daily desserts, eliminating the twice weekly ice cream parlour could cut down on food spending and the money could put into the healthcare budget. Once a week or a few times a month ice cream could be served so that it is not eliminated altogether and residents can still enjoy the treat.

### **Long-term Suggestions**

- 1) Hiring students who are enrolled in healthcare aide programs or nursing school as volunteer healthcare support workers. This is beneficial to the care facility as it is no extra financial burden but they receive healthcare help, and is beneficial to the students as they are earning valuable hands-on experience.

- 2) Host galas or events at the care facility (no finances spent on renting a space) to raise money for the care facility. Food could be donated by a company willing to sponsor the event, and residents could participate and enjoy themselves as well. Donations from the event could be put towards developing better hourly wages for healthcare aides.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Summary and overall interpretation of results**

To summarize, there is a staffing shortage of healthcare workers at Glenmore Lodge Care Community. The three main areas of understaffing at the care facility are healthcare aides, nurses (registered and licensed), and mental health support workers, and this shortage has been apparent at the lodge for approximately the past year. When asked the main reason Glenmore Lodge's healthcare department is understaffed, the employees of the facility cite challenging patients/job difficulty, inadequate pay, and better healthcare jobs elsewhere. It was found that hourly wages for healthcare aides is \$1-4 dollars less at Glenmore Lodge than at other long-term care facilities, which could be a contributing factor to the staffing shortage. Healthcare workers were found to generally enjoy their jobs, despite its difficulties. A few solutions offered by the employees of the care facility were fundraising and hiring more volunteers.

### **Recommendations**

In order to improve the current staffing shortage at Glenmore Lodge, short-term and long-term recommendations were given. Recommended short-term solutions include removing daily desserts and removing regular ice cream parlour days and modifying these two to occur slightly less frequently. Recommended long-term solutions include hiring healthcare aide students and nursing students as volunteer healthcare support workers while they complete their programs, and host fundraising events to raise money for the healthcare departments at the care facility.

### Appendix A: Survey Questions

1) In your opinion, is there a staffing shortage at the Glenmore Lodge Care Community?

Yes                      No

2) Have you ever felt overworked due to the lack of staff? (If you responded yes to the first question)

Yes                      No

3) If you believe there is a staffing shortage, what are a few reasons you believe are contributing to the shortage?

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4) Have you noticed the management trying to find a solution or trying to implement any changes to help alleviate the staffing issue?

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5) What changes would you like to see regarding staffing at the care facility? Please list all changes.

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6) Summing up your thoughts on the lack of healthcare staff at the Glenmore Lodge Care Community (if you agree that there is a staffing shortage)... Please pick one main reason for the staffing shortage and please circle the answer below.

Pay	Lack of proper training
Difficulty of job	Better healthcare jobs elsewhere (hospitals, etc.)
Hours	Not putting learned skills to use/feeling overqualified for the job
Challenging patients (violence, negativity, etc.)	Care needs of patients are too complex/difficult

Please write any additional comments you have below.

**Appendix B: Interview Questions**

- 1) In previous discussions at the care facility, it has been stated that there is a lack of healthcare staff at the care facility. In your opinion, are you in agreement with this? If yes, which department is lacking in staff the most?
- 2) Going off of the above answer, why do you think this department is the least full, staff-wise?
- 3) When did you start to notice this decline in healthcare staff?
- 4) Please state 2-3 reasons you believe the care facility is having a difficult time with staffing.
- 5) Do you know of any changes that have been made at the care facility in order to try and alleviate the staffing shortage?
- 6) Do you think that working at a long-term care facility with seniors with dementia and other complex needs is more difficult than working at a hospital (or another common location nurses and care aides may choose to work at)?
- 7) Are you aware of this issue being prevalent in other long-term care facilities as well? Or is this problem only apparent at Glenmore lodge?
- 8) What are the effects and consequences you have noticed at the care facility due to the staffing shortage?
- 9) Please state what you think would be the best short-term solutions that are fairly easy to implement.
- 10) In your opinion, are there aspects of recreation, food/snacks, or other areas at the care facility that could be decreased in order to increase the funds to hire more staff? Would this be at all possible, or would cutting these programs put the mental health and wellbeing of the residents at risk?
- 11) Please state what you think are the best long-term solutions that the care facility should implement.

Additional comments:



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