

Situation Critical

Urgent Action Needed Now to Support ICUs & ERs

May 20, 2021



Summary

Situation Critical

As ICUs and hospitals are again pushed beyond their limits by a surge in COVID-19 admissions, the situation has become more perilous today than it was during the second wave of the pandemic.

Physicians are very concerned, and urgent action is needed to ensure Manitobans who need hospital care can get it.

Our survey of ICU and ER physicians found:

- 98% are concerned their hospitals aren't ready to accommodate the third wave surge in patients
- 90% are worried patients won't get the care they need

A record 131 patients are receiving intensive care, 82% over normal ICU capacity. This includes 80 ICU patients linked to COVID-19.

Solutions Limited

As ICUs struggle to keep up, physicians identified the top barriers to expanding capacity:

- 100% are concerned about nursing coverage
- 92% are concerned about additional space

With few local options left to address these issues, urgent action is needed and the most promising solutions physicians can identify include appealing to other provinces for help, or calling in the military for medical assistance.

While progress has been made by the health system on some of the recommendations physicians made last November, the lack of consultation and information remains a major concern.

Physicians are distressed about the lack of contingency planning, or the lack of information about these plans, with 93% of physicians indicating they do not have enough information.

Hospitals are not ready.

98% of physicians are worried hospitals aren't ready to handle the surge in COVID-19 patients during the third wave.

79% of physicians say hospitals are not better prepared for the third wave than they were for the second wave.

Lack of info and consultation is distressing.

A lack of planning for hospital contingency, or information about the plan, is causing distress among physicians, with 9 in 10 worried patients won't get the care they need.

"There has been no consultation with stakeholders or practitioners regarding management of this third wave."

Last November, Doctors Manitoba recommended that health system leaders should engage physicians, seek their input, and share details of hospital capacity plans. What we said then remains true today:

"Sharing information instills confidence and trust. Keeping it secret does the opposite."

93% of physicians don't have enough information about the health system plan to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients.

90% of physicians are worried patients won't get the care they need because they don't have enough information about hospital contingency plans.

Nursing and Space are Top ICU Concerns.

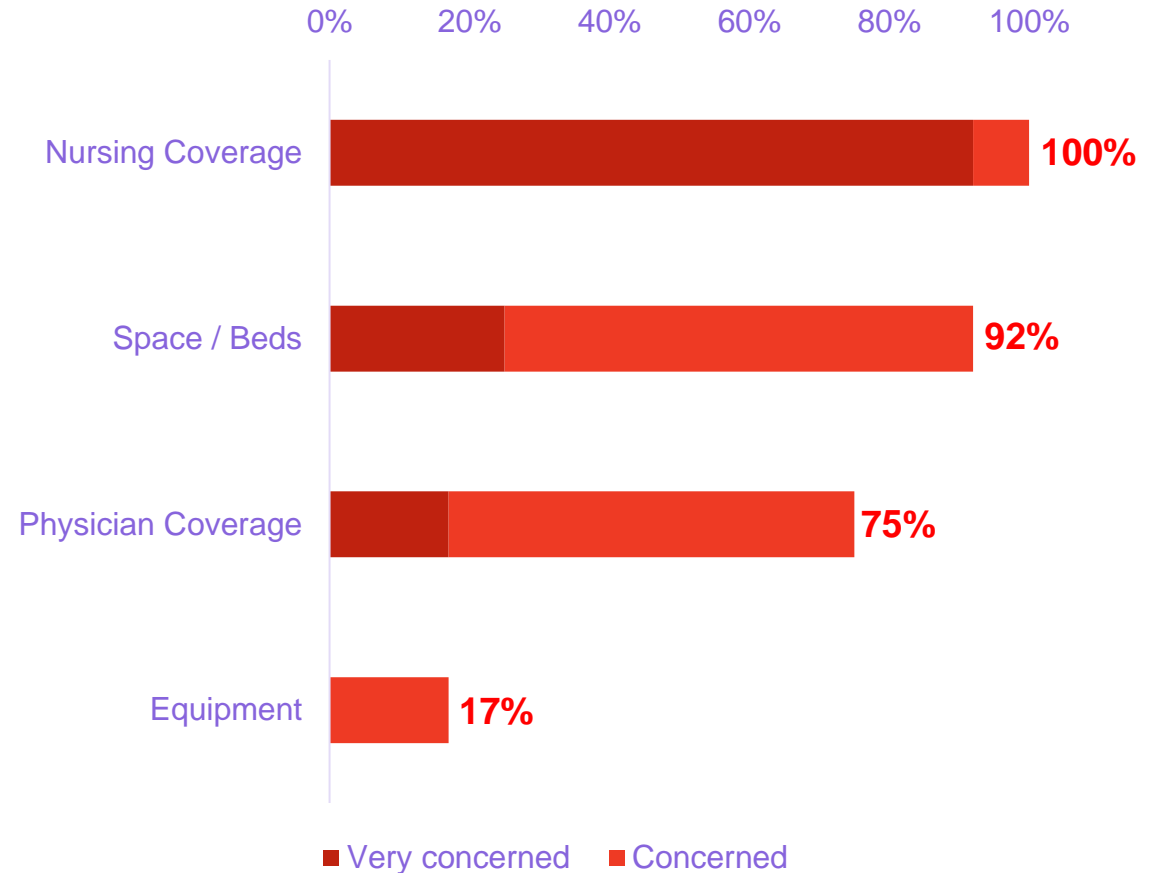
Physicians identified the primary barriers to maintaining and expanding ICU capacity, including:

- 100% are concerned about nursing coverage
- 92% are worried about a lack of space and beds to accommodate more admissions

There are fewer concerns now about equipment, such as ventilators.

Concerns were also raised about ICU medical coverage, though doctors said they are prepared to keep “pitching in.” 80% of critical care physicians have already picked up additional coverage.

Top Concerns about ICU Capacity
Concerns identified by Critical Care Physicians (%)



Nursing Coverage Needs Urgent Action.

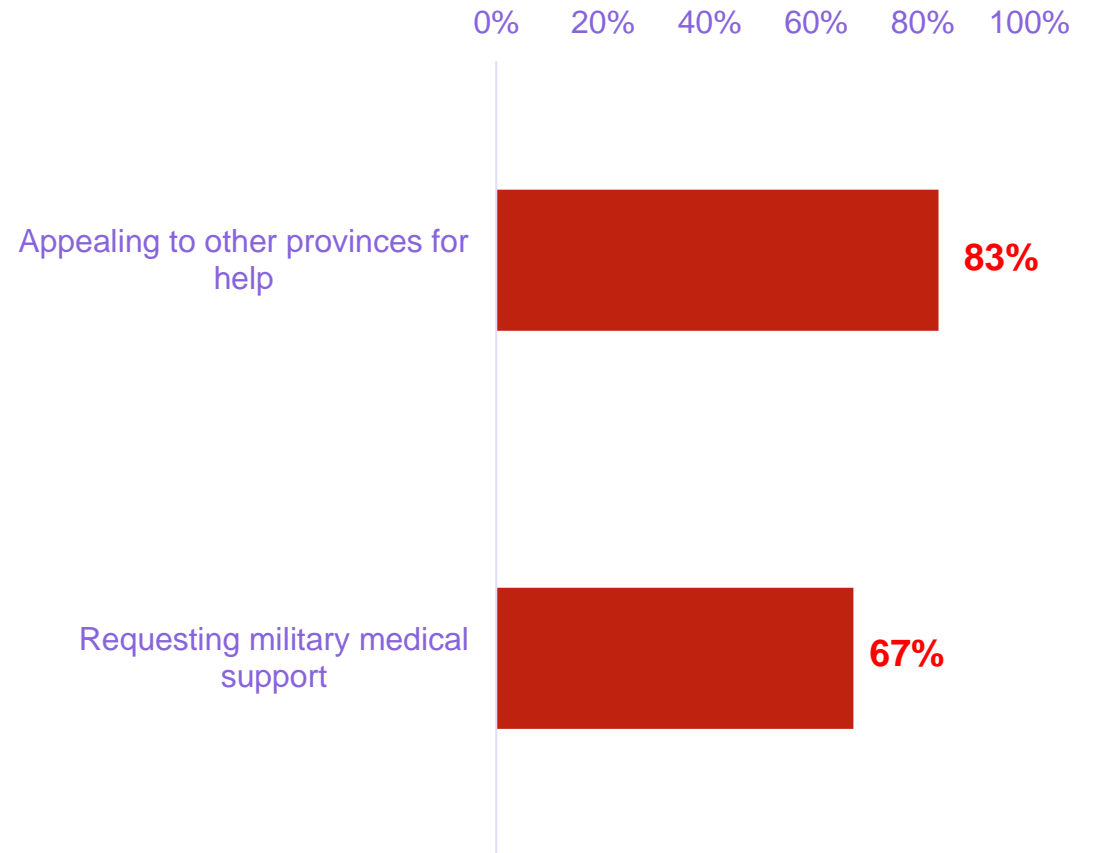
ICU nurses receive extensive specialized training, and there was a shortage before the pandemic. Physicians noted local options to add more critical care nurses have been exhausted, such as appealing to former or retired nurses.

“We need nurses to expand the bed base.”

“All the nursing options have been done already except calling other provinces or the military. No more Manitoba nurses are coming.”

Asking for help during a crisis is a sign of strength, not weakness.

What would be most helpful to address ICU nursing shortage now?



Concerns About ER Capacity.

An increase in patient visits, combined with delays in sending critically ill patients to ICU, is creating tremendous pressure on ER capacity:

- 97% of physicians have observed longer waits to transfer patients to ICU over the last week.
- Physicians report that each ER has routinely had 2-3 critically ill patients, on average, waiting for an ICU bed.

ER physicians are very concerned about running out of capacity to meet increasing patient needs:

- 100% are concerned about nursing resources.
“I’m extremely concerned about the emergency nursing shortage.”
- 100% are concerned there are not enough treatment spaces.

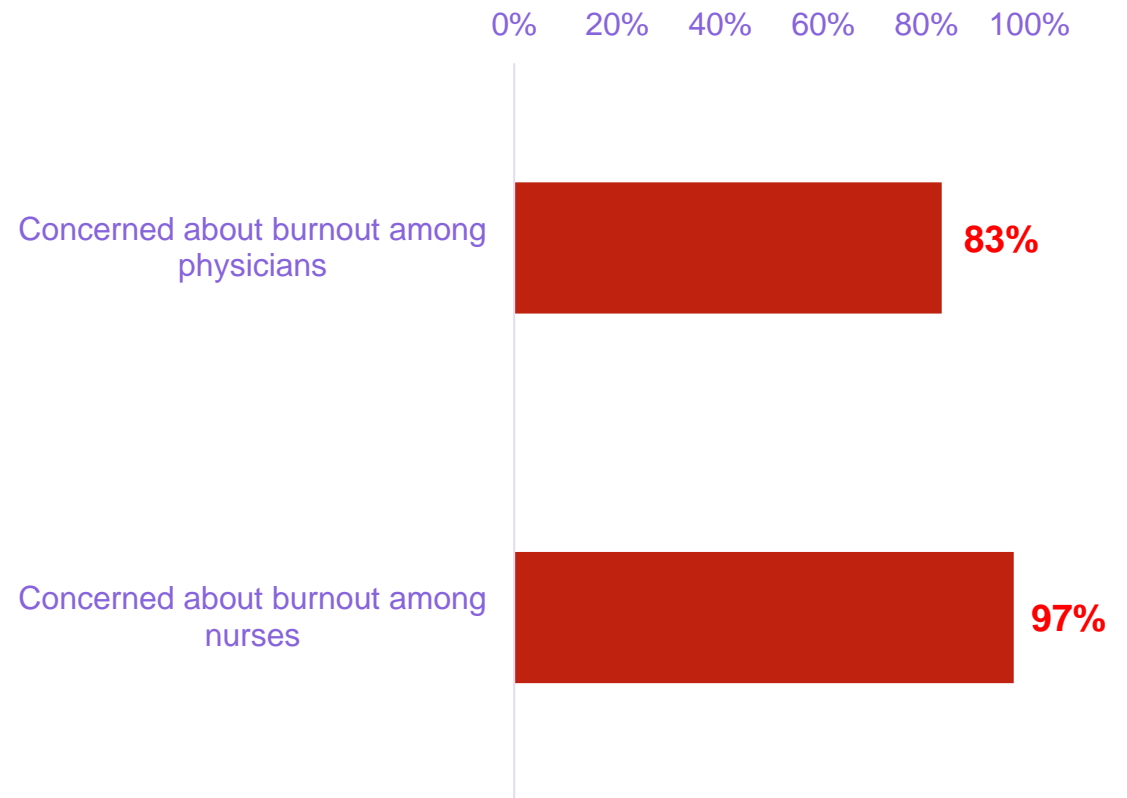
Burnout Crisis Developing.

Between the second and third wave, ICU and ER staff have been under constant pressure for over half a year.

Workload, moral distress, feeling unsupported, and a continued lack of information or consultation are all contributing to burnout.

Physicians are more worried about burnout among nurses than themselves, but a “burnout crisis” is developing among both groups of health care professionals.

Physicians concerned about burnout and health issues following third wave



Background

This report is based on the advice and concerns from physicians about the current hospital situation in Manitoba. This includes survey conducted between May 17 and May 19, 2021 with 54 responses from critical care and emergency physicians.

This follows a report with 27 recommendations submitted to Shared Health in November 2020. Doctors Manitoba recognizes progress on a number of these recommendations, including access to PPE and efforts to minimize the disruptions to surgery, but many of the issues we escalated then are issues again today during this third wave:

- Physicians continue to be distressed by a lack of information about contingency plans.
- Concerns remain about a triage protocol to guide decisions if critical care resources are overwhelmed. Earlier this week, provincial officials

revealed that no such protocol has yet been developed.

- The contingency plan for ERs, also facing pressures from the surge in cases, remains unclear.



Questions?

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