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Welcome to Talking Health Care. Insights from global leaders.

Produced by the International Hospital Federation, the Talking Health Care Podcast series will feature healthcare leaders and executives from the IHF's global community, sharing their expertise, knowledge and insights into cutting-edge topics in health care. Whether you're a global healthcare executive or a patient at a healthcare facility, we can all agree that the healthcare workforce is the cornerstone of the health system in every country.

Health systems are dependent on the availability, accessible and quality of healthcare workers to provide health care of the highest standards. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, reports raised concerns about the potential shortage of healthcare workers to meet future population needs. And since the pandemic began, this looming crisis has become one of the top priorities for health systems to tackle around the world.

It's my pleasure to introduce you to former hospital CEO and Director of Professional Development with the International Hospital Federation, Linda Clark, to host today's discussion.

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**Linda Clark**

Thanks, Eleonor, and hello to all of our listeners. Workforce is such a strategic priority for all of us. If you read the newspapers and read the headlines, it's so hard to know where the truth lies. The great resignation, the globalization of our workforce, staff shortages, low employment, diversity and inclusivity. There's so many places that we could talk today, but today you're going to hear from our expert on the subject of healthcare workforce.

We're sharing insights into the scale of the problem and the types of solutions that can be found. I'm happy to introduce Professor Henriette Neumeyer is the Vice Chairwoman of the Board of the German Hospital Federation, where she leads the Department of Political Affairs and Hospital Workforce, as well as the unit of international relations. For members of our audience who might be unaware of the current situation.

Henriette, I'd like to start by asking you to give us a sense of what exactly the challenges we're facing and what the predictions for the future are, and whether those challenges are global. So let's start with exactly what kind of challenges are you facing in Germany?

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**Henriette Neumeyer**

Well, I think it's a complex situation. The situation in Germany is mainly derived from the demographic crisis, as we would like to call it. Since we are facing a situation in which the healthcare workforce is getting thinner and thinner in the process. With the population of

people in need, of care is constantly rising. So that's the main parameter that we're looking at in regard to the problems.

And therefore we have problems with the availability of healthcare workers, skilled people who can provide care. And I think that's also a global challenge which we are all facing in different countries, leading kind of to travel of health care workers across the globe. So that's something that we're looking at. But also, as you just mentioned in your introduction, the problem of fatigue in health care workers that who are drained from working under pandemic circumstances and wishing for more and more and more digitized way of working, but also looking for a longing for leadership approach that matches their needs and being acknowledged and being led towards a very team-based future of work and also being able to participate in the innovation that the work-life today has to offer. For example, Home Office and such.

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**Linda Clark**

Things really have changed and been so impacted by COVID. We talk in our program about pipeline recruitment and retention. Are all three of those areas that you are focused on?

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**Henriette Neumeyer**

Yes, absolutely. We see a problem in pipeline in terms of motivating people to join the healthcare workforce of the future. And also we have just that demographic problem that smaller generations are going to follow. So the availability of health care staff is problematic and we certainly are looking with a very fresh view to recruitment and retention. During the last decades, there was always kind of a good availability of healthcare workforce in the market, and that drove behaviour in recruiting new members for that group.

So we see seniors in a position of really having to make labor attractive in the health care workforce, since everybody knows during the pandemic that it can be straining, but you also saw that it is really rewarding and something that is highly sophisticated work. So matching those two together making the work attractive once again and to recruit people is something that sometimes even is a really competitive business.

We see the healthcare institutions really driving up their actions towards gathering skilled workers. And then I think what got into focus way more than during the last decades is retention. Since we see a lot of programs in hospitals, for example, right now that want to make staying more attractive so people get less attracted by, for example, getting offered more money for working, but will be provided sufficient support, not only in their work life in the institution but also around it.

For example, providing care for children or supporting with a care for their elderly at home. So it really got more complex and more supportive in terms of the way that healthcare

institutions have to address that workforce. And that's also a challenge, since this requires, for example, only to name that leadership that will provide for that sufficiently.

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**Linda Clark**

It's such a complex subject with so many different tentacles and parallels. So you've touched on a couple of issues that you've faced. Have you identified two or three key root causes or the base problems, the challenges that we're facing?

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**Henriette Neumeyer**

Well, in Germany, we see one thing that is called the reserve or the silent reserve. That means that we have a lot of healthcare workers who were who had the situation of being drained in their work environment. Who felt exhausted and who left or we left the system entirely or reduced the time that they spent in their jobs significantly.

So that's a phenomenon that we are looking at and we are trying to reverse bad and as you just said, it's a complex topic we're talking about. So we see a lot of people asking for better leadership, very good communicative work from their leaders. And for example, one topic that might not surprise in terms of healthcare work was people are longing for enough time to invest in the care for their patients.

So that's something that drives people out of their workplace. And we have to really jump in on making the system of their jobs more rewarding, more attractive in terms of wanting of people wanting to stay in the system. So that's one of our main difficulties here that we really need to drive retention at looking at what actually drives people out of their jobs. So that's something that we are looking at.

And surely the demographic situation isn't getting better. So the competition between the separate areas of the economy is rising and everybody's trying to gather those skilled workers. For example, there's a competition between administrative work in health care and work. For example, for entrepreneurial endeavors and classic healthcare jobs. So that's something that we're also facing, and we'll have to work for making health care work more attractive, more modern.

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**Linda Clark**

We certainly have always depended on, as administrators and policymakers on the heart of our caregivers and their willingness to do the right thing for their patients. And we do face lots of challenges as they're tired and worn out. And I love the concept of the reserve, as you've described it. So it clearly is a problem. Pretty much everywhere we all face COVID and every part of the globe is as dealing with this, these challenges maybe in just a little bit different circumstances.

But I want to end on some good news. Do you have any positive news you can share with us? Or things that you all are undertaking and that might be yielding some results.

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**Henriette Neumeyer**

Yeah, we see a lot of exciting movements across the healthcare sector right now, especially those projects that want to improve the work settings are on the rise. For example, the Charite, quite a famous university clinic in Berlin, is really going for transformational leadership, and they offer their employees more space to grow in, more space to make their own decisions, all with good guidance, all scientifically based, but trying to give trust and to make evolution possible and to apply modern leadership approaches.

And I think they are kind of at the top of a movement that really wants to make health care more modern. For example, they do establishing an approach in which it can work partly in administrative, creative, project-based work, and then with the patient, for example, in the Department of Intensive Care. So they want to give an environment in which people can balance what they can shoulder in terms of working with the patients, working night shifts. For example, to make the job more attractive, and also to gather that very valuable knowledge and experiences that health care workers made over time so they can contribute it in to improving the system.

So that's something that we see a lot. And there is coming there is a new generation of leaders coming who are supporting this and that. And I think the good thing with the challenges we are facing right now is that it drives change and people are much more willing to support for that because that drives people wanting to work for you and stay working for you.

And that actually is good for patient care. So that's the positive note might be that, well, we can provide here and see that a lot of people are getting more excited for topics around health care that will influence their wish to stay with employees, for example, sustainability management. We see hospitals that are really on the forefront of going green and healthy hospitals movement. And this is something that really attracts employees towards those hospitals, towards those care providers, since we see that they are longing for modern topics, interconnected with society and societal realities.

So that's something that seems to be one thing that is really driving some kind of enthusiasm.

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**Linda Clark**

That's great. Thank you very much for these great ideas. I think we are going to have a challenging future, but we're going to have lots of opportunities as well. So thank you very much for joining us today. I hope you enjoyed today's discussion. I know I did.

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**Henriette Neumeyer**

Well, thank you so much, Linda. I'm really looking forward to your Congress session in Dubai. And to all of you who are listening, I would love to you to join our session there and to meet you in person and to discuss those challenges.

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**Linda Clark**

And if you're keen to hear more, I'm pleased to let you know that there will be a plenary session dedicated to the challenges of healthcare workforce at this year's World Hospital Congress from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of November in Dubai. We're excited that this session will be chaired by Wright. Lasseter, the third, the CEO of Common Spirit Health, the USA, who has over 30 years of experience working in large, complex health systems, including Henry Ford Alameda Health System in Oakland, California, JP S Health Network in Fort Worth, Texas. Dallas Methodist Health System. So it's going to be quite a challenging and interesting discussion and we look forward to you attending the session and to meeting everyone in person in Dubai.

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You can find all the registration information on the website World Hospital Congress.org. And this is where you can also keep up to date with all the latest details on Sessions, speakers and everything else we talked about today. You can also sign up to the mailing list and we will deliver regular updates right to your inbox. Thank you so much for tuning in.

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