By Kia Pajouhesh

The Great Resignation in the health sector

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In the wake of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a phenomena dubbed the "Great Resignation", where employees have voluntarily resigned from their jobs *en masse*, began to be seen in hospitality, healthcare, education and elsewhere. Many health-sector employees, taking advantage of the widescale skills shortages that followed an unprecedented increase in consumer demand, negotiated better work conditions and salaries with their employers. Alternatively some employees, per the trend, chose to switch jobs altogether, many more than once.

Here are 7 pitfalls to consider before you make the switch...

Danger money

1 The health care practices offering pay well above market rates may be offering you "danger money". Some practices struggle to retain staff for a variety of reasons, so are forced to pay above-market sums simply to attract staff. Reasons may include poor HR practices, infection control and workplace culture, to name but a few. As a guide, look for other long-serving current employees of the business in similar roles.

Cat-fished job descriptions

2 You may sign off on a job description you're comfortable with, only to discover the new role comes with a series of tasks and expectations that are not worth the hours of unsupported physical and mental stress that comes with the pay increase. Be very clear on your proposed job description - not only in what it "includes" but also in what it excludes.

Could this be your very last pay rise?

3 The practices paying danger money to simply secure your services may struggle to offer another pay rise for a very long time. Apart from negotiating your new pay rate, also negotiate your next pay rise date and the approximate quantum of that rise if you meet the reasonable expectations set down for you in your new role.

The begrudging new boss or manager

4 Some practice owners and managers securing your services on danger money may "begrudge" the money they are paying you. Set to plague your relationship may be never-ending unrealistic and shifting expectations on performance, hours of work and duties.

Overtime denial

5 Your overtime hours may be disregarded in your new workplace. There may be expectations on you to start early, finish late and work through part of your lunch breaks, almost always unpaid. An expectation to work an additional 15 minutes at either end of the day and 15 mins into your lunch break will erode over 11% off your hourly rate on a standard 38-hour-per-week roster. Some businesses may also avoid paying overtime rates for weekend work and long shifts.

Fluctuating work hours

6 Whilst your minimum weekly hours are safe in good economic conditions, any downturn in business revenue or gaps in the appointment books may lead to a reduction of your weekly hours. Unwanted obligatory late starts and early finishes can eat heavily into your pay packet.

The dead-end move

7 Some roles within the health sector are a stepping stone to more learning and career development; others are dead-end roles with no career pathways. Carefully consider the pros and cons of choosing near-term financial upsides over career progression within your business and industry as a whole.

About the author

Dr Kia Pajouhesh, a University of Melbourne graduate, established Smile Solutions in 1993. Situated in the heart of Melbourne's CBD and incorporating the Collins Street Specialist Centre, Smile Solutions is the largest singly located dental practice in Australia engaging over 80 clinicians, including 20 board registered specialists. Together with his Core Dental chain of practices, he controls over 100 chairs across Melbourne, with a combined patient base of 350,000.