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## **Third of senior practice nurses paid 27 per cent less than hospital counterparts**



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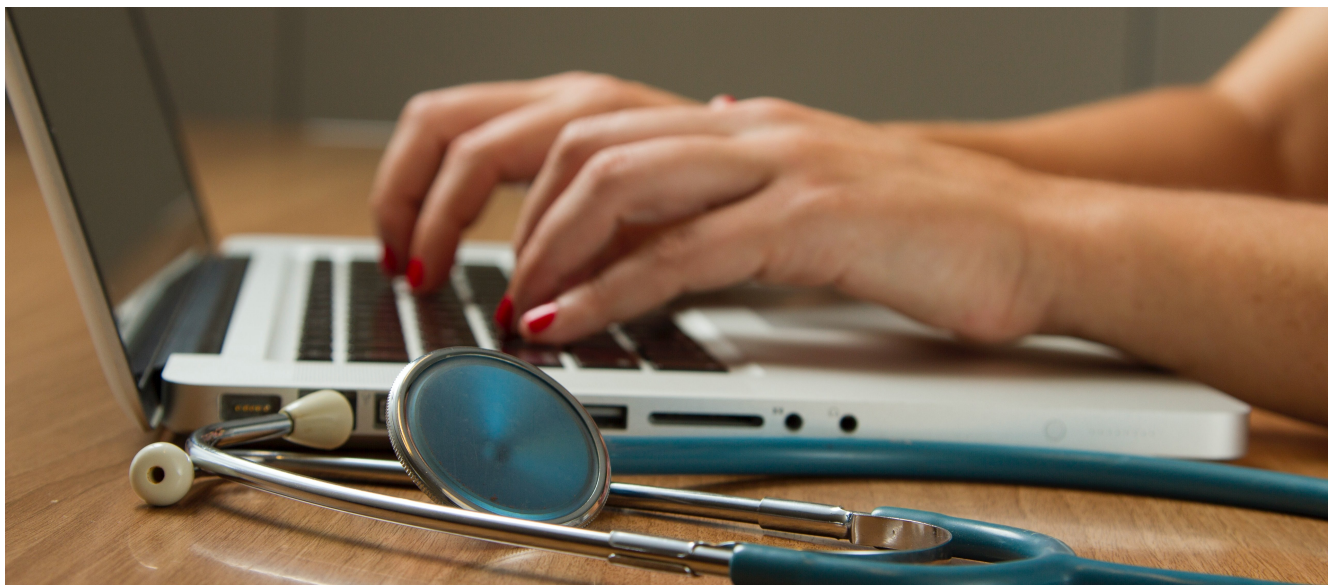
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Monday 24 April

2023, 04:36 PM



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An NZNO survey finds the median wage rate for a practice nurse at the top of the basic pay scale is \$37.82 [image: National Cancer Institute on Unsplash]

A nurses' union survey has found that about a third of senior practice nurses are being paid nearly \$10 an hour less than their Te Whatu Ora colleagues.

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation **at the weekend released the results of its March pay disparity survey** of practice nurse members.

The union's survey release follows a controversial **Te Whatu Ora survey sent out last week to all general practices gathering similar data** to help decide what share general practices might receive from a \$200 million-a-year-funding pot for pay disparities.

**20-27% pay gap real for a third**

The NZNO survey found that the majority (651) of the 933 registered nurse respondents were experienced nurses sitting at the top of the six-step basic pay scale.

Of these senior nurses, just under a third reported they were being paid the current NZNO primary health care agreement rate of \$36.02 an hour. That's \$8.34 (23 per cent) less than the Te Whatu Ora step-six pay rate.

Most of these practice nurses would be eligible to be on step 7 of the Te Whatu Ora pay scale so could be earning \$9.68 (27 per cent) more if working at a public hospital.

The survey found, on average, practice nurses were being paid 14 to 20.8 per cent (\$5.77 to \$9.68) less than their Te Whatu Ora colleagues.

The median wage rate for a practice nurse on step 6 was \$37.82 and only 31 of the 933 reported being paid above the current Te Whatu Ora pay equity rates.

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**Pay disparity proven**

Primary health care nurse and NZNO delegate Denise Moore says, in the NZNO media release, the findings show practice nurses being twice excluded from Government funding to address pay disparities is “manifestly unjust”.

“Nurses are leaving general practice in unprecedented numbers because they cannot make ends meet financially, and Government telling them they don’t need a pay rise has been the last straw for many,” Ms Moore says.

She says the loss of nurses affects community health services and increases pressure on hospitals.

“This is something the Government must address without delay. We are losing nurses at a rapid rate and poor wages mean we cannot compete when trying to replace them.”

**College of Nurses endorse survey**

College of Nurses Aotearoa executive director Kate Weston says the college supports the NZNO survey, noting it confirms the pay gap experienced by practice nurses and saying this needs to be addressed by Te Whatu Ora and health minister Ayesha Verrall with urgency.

Ms Weston says: “To keep our nurses valued and more particularly to keep our nurses in Aotearoa, we really do need to address disparities where they exist, so a nurse is a nurse and is paid what they are worth, irrespective of where they are working.”

She says it would be disappointing if Te Whatu Ora and the minister decided to only partially resolve the disparities faced by primary health care nurses, who fought a lot of the COVID battle that helped keep people out of hospital.

“We really do need to ensure and bolster that frontline of health care nurses to feel valued, properly remunerated and acknowledged for the amazing work they do,” she says.

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