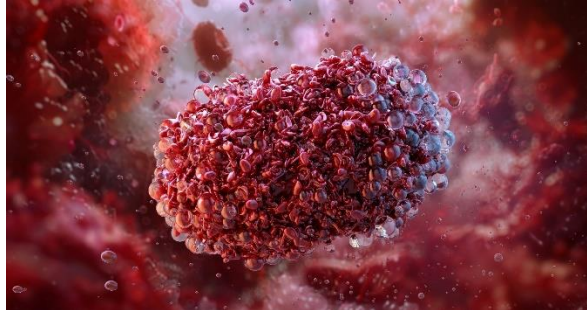


Due to Knowledge Gaps and Vaccine Inequity Healthcare Workers Unprepared for Mpox Outbreak

A survey was recently conducted to understand the experiences and perceptions of multi-national healthcare workers during the recent [mpox outbreaks](#) worldwide.



Study

This survey was conducted between August and October 2022 on [healthcare](#) workers involved in the clinical management of mpox outbreaks. A total of 725 multi-national healthcare workers from 41 non-endemic countries were enrolled for the survey.

Self-reported data on clinical workload, safety, preparedness, workplace training and support, mental wellbeing, and [vaccination](#) was collected through online questionnaires. The emergence of mpox outside historically affected regions posed new challenges, particularly in the context of ongoing global health crises like COVID-19.

Findings

Healthcare workers in the United Kingdom, the European Union, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, the [United States](#), and Canada participated in this survey.

About 91% of participants were physicians specialized in sexual health or infectious diseases, and 34% were involved in [mpox policy](#).

About 41% of participants reported longer working hours during the mpox outbreak, and 87% reported dealing with this extra load along with their regular clinical responsibilities. This additional workload, without the removal of existing responsibilities, exacerbated the pressure on healthcare systems already strained by the ongoing [pandemic](#).

About 30% of participants reported not having any knowledge about mpox before the outbreak, with only 1% reporting having experience treating a mpox case before the outbreak. This highlights the significant knowledge gap among healthcare workers about [re-emerging diseases](#), a critical concern given the increasing frequency of such outbreaks.

More than 25% of participants reported misdiagnosing someone with a mpox-related rash with another condition initially. The most commonly reported misdiagnoses were chickenpox, syphilis, and [herpes](#).

Over half of the study population agreed that their institutions provided clear, timely, and authoritative information about the disease and that they had received the required education, training, or instruction. However, there were [notable regional disparities](#), with healthcare workers

in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America reporting significantly less institutional support compared to their counterparts in Europe and North America.

About 60% and 72% of participants reported following local service guidelines and national guidelines, respectively. About 40% of participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the support received from national [public health](#) agencies. This dissatisfaction was particularly pronounced in regions with historically limited access to public health resources, underscoring the need for more equitable support structures.

More than half of the study population reported feeling moral distress due to their work experiences in managing suspected or confirmed [clinical cases](#) of mpox. About 37% of participants reported impaired psychological wellbeing due to moral distress.

The study's findings emphasize the significant [psychological](#) toll on healthcare workers, which could have long-term consequences for the sustainability of the workforce.

Vaccination to Prevent Mpox

Less than 50% of participants reported receiving smallpox vaccination before the mpox outbreak. In the USA, Europe, and Canada, around one in three participants received the vaccine, whereas the vaccination rate was one in ten in the Caribbean, [Central America](#), and South America.

Overall, the vaccine uptake was high across all studied regions. More than 90% of participants in each region reported that vaccination should be offered to people at high risk of mpox infection prior to [exposure](#).

Despite this high acceptance, the survey revealed significant inequities in vaccine access, particularly in low-resourced regions, which mirrored the challenges faced during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Conclusion

This multi-national survey finds a profound gap in knowledge about mpox among healthcare workers, even though this [neglected disease](#) has been circulating among humans since 1970.

Such a deficit in knowledge highlights the urgent need for increasing global [pandemic](#) preparedness initiatives for frontline healthcare workers.

The findings suggest that health systems must prioritize educating and training healthcare workers on emerging [infectious diseases](#) to ensure rapid and effective responses in future outbreaks.

The survey finds a high vaccine acceptance and uptake level among healthcare workers involved in managing suspected or confirmed mpox cases. However, [vaccine inequity](#) and access have been significant in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. This inequity hampers the effectiveness of outbreak responses in these regions and raises concerns about global health interventions' overall fairness and efficiency.

Such inequity highlights the need to prioritize healthcare workers for mpox vaccination, particularly in regions with scarce infection prevention resources. The study calls for a coordinated [global effort](#) to address these disparities and ensure that healthcare workers,

especially in low-resourced settings, are adequately protected. The scientists mentioned that similar surveys should be conducted on African clinicians to understand how unavailability or inaccessibility to essential resources like vaccines impacts their psychological well-being and perception of support.

Overall, the survey findings highlight a critical need for strengthening the resilience of global health systems and multidisciplinary approaches against future outbreaks. This resilience-building must include addressing the [systemic issues](#) leading to healthcare worker burnout and moral distress, ensuring that the global healthcare workforce is prepared and supported in future public health emergencies.

Source:

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20240827/Healthcare-workers-unprepared-for-mpox-outbreak-due-to-knowledge-gaps-and-vaccine-inequity.aspx>