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**Corresponding author:**

Mari Kangasniemi

mari.kangasniemi@utu.fi

**Author Affiliation:**

Department of Nursing Science,  
Faculty of Medicine, University of  
Turku, Turku, Finland.

Kangasniemi, M; Lantta, T; Anttila, H; Hult, M; Pakarinen, A; Joronen, K.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION****Support - None.****Review Stage at time of this submission -** Piloting of the study selection process.**Conflicts of interest -** None declared.**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY2024110068**Amendments -** This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 16 November 2024 and was last updated on 16 November 2024.**INTRODUCTION**

**Review question / Objective** The objective of this scoping review is to describe what type of prospective cohorts exist relating to care workers' professional careers, which research methods have been employed to study these cohorts, and what different factors relating to care workers' professional careers have been studied.

**Background** Global care workforce is in crisis. Care professionals are the largest workforce within social- and healthcare services. However, currently global social- and healthcare is striving to meet the growing demands of ageing populations, increasing quantity of chronic diseases, changing expectations and increasing health threats associated with environmental crises and health emergencies. Social- and healthcare struggles with

the challenges of uneven distribution of resources, miscellaneous skill mix, and lack of professional care workers. Care workers wrestle with problems such as increasing demands at work leading to decline in physical and mental health and well-being, burnout, stress and retention. There is a need to attract young people into the care professions and safeguard the health and well-being of those that are already working in social- and healthcare to ensure sustainable services.

There is a large spectrum of care professionals working within social- and healthcare services. A variety of care professionals with different levels of degrees, experience and backgrounds work to meet the care needs of the global population. What drives a person to pursue a career in care work and what motivates them to remain employed are essential questions to be asked, when trying to find answers to the global care workforce crisis.

This is a protocol for a scoping review that aims to describe the longitudinal research that is or has been done on professional care work careers and the different factors that affect them.

**Rationale** By researching care workers' professional careers, challenges can be described and successful practices recognized. It is essential to describe what factors associated to care workers' professional careers have been researched to inform healthcare providers, researchers and policymakers of gaps in research and direction for future research and decision-making. Although many systematic reviews have been made on different factors associated with care work careers, only a handful of them have concentrated exclusively on prospective cohorts. According to preliminary searches on previous reviews on the topic, there does not seem to exist a review that gathers all the cohort studies of versatile factors relating to care workers' professional careers. However, the number of prospective cohorts on this topic is large. This scoping review concentrates on investigating prospective cohorts to describe the longitudinal/follow-up data of care workers' professional careers and related factors within shorter and longer periods of time. The results of this scoping review may serve to inform future cohort studies of suitable research variables and act as a foundation for a national/international care workforce register.

## METHODS

**Strategy of data synthesis** Search will be conducted in the following eight databases: PubMed (MEDLINE), CINAHL (EBSCO), Scopus (Elsevier), Web of Science core collection (Clarivate), PsycINFO (EBSCO), SocINDEX (EBSCO), ERIC (EBSCO) and EconLit (ProQuest). The search strategy combines the key concepts of the review, which are: prospective cohort, professional care worker and career. These and related terms are combined as free words and subject headings as appropriate in different databases.

The search will be directed to all results to date, without a time limit. However, the results are restricted to English language and peer reviewed empirical articles. The free word searches were directed towards titles and abstracts. An example of a search term in PubMed: ("Cohort Studies"[Mesh] OR prospective\*[tw] OR cohort\*[tw] OR longitud\*[tw] OR "follow-up stud\*"[tw]) AND ("Allied Health Personnel"[Mesh] OR "Nurses"[Mesh] OR "Nursing Staff"[Mesh] OR nurs\*[tw] OR midwi\*[tw] OR paramedic\*[tw] OR

"care assistant\*"[tw]) AND (career\*[tw] OR work\*[tw] OR job[tw] OR occupation\*[tw] OR employ\*[tw]).

**Eligibility criteria** Inclusion criteria for articles in this scoping review are: 1) Prospective cohort studies that have already ended or are on-going and published prospective cohort study protocols. 2) Studies with different methods of data collection (e.g. surveys, interviews, registers, physiological measurements). 3) Studies that focus on care workers with a formal degree (secondary or higher) in care work (e.g. registered nurses, practical nurses, formal care/nursing assistants, midwives, paramedics etc.) or students aiming for a formal degree in care work. Also, care workers with a formal degree that also work in a managerial position, as teachers or as researchers are included. 4) Studies that focus on participants that are at different phases of their career (intention to pursue a career in care work, education leading to care work, work-life and leaving care career). 5) Studies may describe any aspect(s) concerning care workers' professional career (e.g. commitment to work, competence, coping at work etc.).

Exclusion criteria for articles are: 1) Cross-sectional studies, repeated cross-sectional studies, retrospective cohort studies and studies containing a man-made intervention. 2) Studies focusing on other health- and social care professionals than care workers (e.g. physicians) or assistive health personnel in diagnostic and therapeutic services without background in care work (e.g. laboratory assistants, x-ray technicians etc.).

### Source of evidence screening and selection

After completing the search the resulting articles will be uploaded into the reference management software for systematic reviews, Covidence. After duplicates are automatically removed, articles' titles and abstracts will be screened for eligibility by two independent researchers. Subsequently studies that meet the inclusion criteria will be reviewed in full text. Any disagreement in the review process will be resolved by consensus or by consulting a third reviewer.

**Data management** Data extraction will be guided by a customized data extraction form. At least two researchers will review the selected articles for the following information: 1) cohort characteristics, 2) study design, 3) study context, 4) study participants, 5) research methods, including data collection, used instruments and data analysis, 6) outcomes, and 7) other variables. These main

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categories are further subcategorized into their specific components.

### Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence

Evidence will be analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. The analysis will be conducted using the appropriate software.

**Presentation of the results** Results will be presented visually as graphs depicting trends in prospective cohort studies in the course of time with the goal of describing the evolution of prospective cohorts relating to care workers' professional careers.

**Language restriction** English.

**Country(ies) involved** Finland.

**Other relevant information** This scoping review will act as a premise for further sub-reviews of cohort studies at the Department of Nursing Science, University of Turku. In future sub-reviews on cohorts relating to care workers' professional careers, we will further examine careers of different care work professionals, with different educational backgrounds, and at different points of their careers (e.g. during education, shortly after graduating, during work-life, close to retirement). Also, sub-reviews on the differences between careers in different geographical areas and different factors affecting careers may be explored.

**Keywords** professional care work, care work, career, care worker, prospective cohort study, scoping review.

**Dissemination plans** Results will be offered for publication to an international peer-reviewed scientific journal in the related field.

### Contributions of each author (Describe each author's contribution after their names).

Author 1 – Mari Kangasniemi

Email: mari.kangasniemi@utu.fi

ORCID 0000-0003-0690-1865

Affiliation: Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Turku, Turku, Finland; The wellbeing services county of Southwest Finland, Turku University Hospital, Turku, Finland

Author 2 – Tellä Lantta

Email: tella.lantta@utu.fi

ORCID 0000-0001-7715-7573

Affiliation: Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Turku, Turku, Finland; Centre for Forensic Behavioural Sciences,

Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia; University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Department of Biomedical, Metabolic, and Neuroscience, Reggio Emilia, Italy

Author 3 – Heidi Anttila

Email: heidi.ma.anttila@utu.fi

ORCID 0009-0007-3389-7976

Affiliation: Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Turku, Turku, Finland; The wellbeing services county of Southwest Finland, Turku University Hospital, Turku, Finland

Author 4 – Marja Hult

Email: marja.hult@utu.fi

ORCID 0000-0002-2020-5914

Affiliation: Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Turku, Turku, Finland; South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, Sustainable Well-being, Mikkeli, Finland

Author 5 – Anni Pakarinen

Email: ankorh@utu.fi

ORCID 0000-0002-9077-1663

Affiliation: Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Author 6 – Katja Joronen

Email: katja.joronen@utu.fi

ORCID 0000-0002-3208-7249

Affiliation: Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Turku, Turku, Finland