

# Emergency department nurses aren't like the rest of us

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(Medical Xpress)—Emergency department nurses aren't like the rest of us - they are more extroverted, agreeable and open - attributes that make them successful in the demanding, fast-paced and often stressful environment of an emergency department, according to a new study by University of Sydney.

"Emergency nurses are a special breed," says Belinda Kennedy from Sydney Nursing School, a 15 year critical care veteran who led the study.

"Despite numerous studies about personalities of nurses in general, there has been little research done on the personalities of nurses in clinical specialty areas.

"My years working as a critical care nurse has made me aware of the difficulty in retaining emergency nurses and I have observed apparent differences in personality among these specialty groups. This prompted me to undertake this research which is the first on this topic in more than 20 years.

"We found that emergency nurses demonstrated significantly higher levels of openness to experience, agreeableness, and extroversion personality domains compared to the normal population.

"Emergency departments (ED) are a highly [stressful environment](#) - busy, noisy, and with high patient turnover. It is the entry point for approximately 40 per cent of all hospital admissions, and the frequency

and type of presentations is unpredictable.

"Emergency nurses must have the capacity to care for the full spectrum of physical, psychological and social health problems within their community.

"They must also be able to develop a rapport with individuals from all age groups and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, in time-critical situations and often at a time when these individuals are at their most vulnerable.

"For these reasons, ED staff experience high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion, so it's understandable that it takes a certain personality type to function in this working environment.

"Our research findings have potential implications for workforce recruitment and retention in emergency nursing.

"With ever-increasing demands on emergency services it is necessary to consider how to enhance the recruitment and retention of emergency nurses in public hospitals. Assessment of personality and knowledge of its influence on specialty selection may assist in improving this.

"The retention of emergency nurses not only has potential economic advantages, but also a likely positive impact on patient care and outcomes, as well as improved morale among the nursing workforce," she said.

**More information:** "The personality of emergency nurses: Is it unique?" Belinda Kennedy, et al. *Australasian Emergency Nursing*, Received: March 4, 2014; Received in revised form: May 27, 2014; Accepted: July 15, 2014; Published Online: August 08, 2014. DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aenj.2014.07.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aenj.2014.07.002)

Provided by University of Sydney

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