



**Leaving and Returning to EMS: Why Providers Leave and Characteristics
Associated with a Desire to Return**

Riddhima Agarwal, BS, Rebecca E. Cash, MPH, NRP, Remle P. Crowe, MS, NREMT,
Severo A. Rodriguez, PhD, NRP, Ashish R. Panchal, MD, PhD
*Poster Presentation at the annual meeting of the National Association of Emergency Medical
Services Physicians / January 24-26, 2017*
Prehospital Emergency Care January/March 2017 Vol. 21 No. 1 p.120

Background: Inadequate staffing of agencies, increasing career attrition rates, and frequent turnover of personnel make employee retention an ongoing concern for EMS. The objectives of this study were three-fold: 1) Describe the proportion of individuals that left EMS and their likelihood of returning to the profession, 2) Compare demographic and employment characteristics of individuals who reported being likely to return to EMS versus those who reported being unlikely to return, and 3) Assess the prevalence of key factors contributing to the decision to leave EMS. We hypothesized that EMS providers who left the profession would be unlikely to return and one of the main factors contributing to the decision to leave would be pursuit of higher education.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study of nationally-certified EMS providers. As part of a larger survey, respondents who reported not currently performing EMS work were directed to a subsection of items regarding leaving the profession. Data were collected on demographic/employment characteristics, likelihood of returning to EMS, and factors influencing the decision to leave EMS. Descriptive and comparative statistics (Chi-square) were calculated.

Results: The overall response rate for the full survey was 10% (n = 32,114). A total of 1,247 (4%) respondents reported leaving the profession and completed the exit survey. The majority reported that they definitely/probably will return to EMS (n = 891, 72%). Males (n = 453, 70%) and females (n = 370, 72%) equally reported a likelihood of returning (p = 0.58). A stepwise decrease in reported likelihood of returning was seen for years of EMS experience (e.g., 2 or less years of experience: n = 505, 83%, 16 or more years: n = 104, 52%, p-trend < 0.001) and months away from EMS (e.g., 0–2 months: n = 213, 89%, more than 12 months: n = 272, 57%, p-trend < 0.001). The most common factors reported to influence the decision to leave included: desire for better pay/benefits (n = 707, 65%), decision to pursue further education (n = 656, 60%), dissatisfaction with organization's management (n = 595, 55%), and desire for career change (n = 581, 54%).

Conclusions: Despite leaving EMS, many respondents reported that they would likely return to the profession. Key factors in the decision to leave were related to compensation, educational advancement, and job dissatisfaction.