

Appendix C: Primer on Gig Nursing

The impact of algorithmic management and AI-powered scheduling technologies on the healthcare industry is largely unknown. In an effort to address this gap, two of the authors of this brief conducted research on the working conditions of gig nurses and gig nursing assistants.¹⁸¹ This research was part of an international project called Fairwork at the University of Oxford and WZB Berlin Social Science Center. This project spanned thirty-nine countries across five continents. We summarize some high-level findings from the US aspects of the project here, along with a worker's story about everyday experiences of a gig nursing platform.

We conducted interviews between November 2023 and September 2024 with twenty-nine US-based healthcare workers about their experiences with four platforms: CareRev, Clipboard Health, ShiftKey, and ShiftMed. We also examined policy reports, scholarly publications, government documents, business filings, media stories, and online forums (e.g., Reddit, Facebook, and the Better Business Bureau).

We found that gig workers face significant health and safety risks in the healthcare industry, where they often have few protections. Thirteen gig nurses reported taking excessive risks to their own health and safety while on the job. Two others shared upsetting experiences of being floated to areas of a hospital for which they had little training. Nearly all workers voiced concerns about lack of training, communication, and supervision in facilities. For many workers on the gig nursing platforms, it was unclear who would be liable if they suffered physical or mental harm due to their platform work or if a patient accused the worker of inadequate care.

Our research also explored how the wage rates on gig nursing platforms can be higher than those of employed nurses, and why these higher rates attract people to platform work. However, the availability of higher wages for some workers did not mean that all or even the majority of workers actually earned these rates. Of the twenty-nine workers in our study, fourteen said they could not make a living through income earned from platforms alone.

A Healthcare Worker's Story

Aisha is a nursing assistant in Georgia who works full-time at a long-term care facility.¹⁸² For years, she supplemented her income with work for DoorDash and UberEats. Two years ago, she signed up to work for ShiftKey at nearby nursing homes and was surprised by the amount of isolation she experienced. She said in an interview: "You really have no one to talk to if [...] you're needing help. [...] It's really no communication with anybody other than yourself."

¹⁸¹ See Wells and Ustek Spilda, "Uber for Nursing"; and Wells, Ustek Spilda, Dubal, and Graham, *Fairwork US Ratings 2025: When AI Eats the Manager*.

¹⁸² This story is excerpted from Wells, Ustek Spilda, Dubal, and Graham, *Fairwork US Ratings 2025: When AI Eats the Manager*.

According to Aisha, ShiftKey sometimes feels pretty similar to DoorDash, which often took her to unfamiliar neighborhoods. For ShiftKey, she has shown up late at night to facilities where the doors are locked and she can't get in contact with anyone at the facility to open them. Even inside certain hospitals, she sometimes feels unsafe.

Most times, there is no orientation for Aisha.¹⁸³ She doesn't know where the supply closets are or how to log into patient portals to figure out which medications a patient is taking.¹⁸⁴ In an interview, she put it this way: "I just feel like I am on an island by myself a lot." The job application includes no interviews; the hiring process has been relegated to algorithmic software systems that screen and evaluate applicants. Performance management, too, has been reduced to a series of metrics that are difficult, if not impossible, for workers to contest.

To win a shift, Aisha bids against peers to see who will work for the lowest amount. Sometimes ShiftKey recommends a bid of \$23.25; other times it's \$25.58. If Aisha bids too high, the app tells her that her bid is "Fair." If she bids too many times, the app tells her that she must accept the default rate at the facility. It's a race to the bottom.¹⁸⁵

Aisha doesn't know why she is paid less than her peers for certain shifts. She doesn't know what data the platform collects about her—including her geolocation data—or how they use it to set her wages. ShiftKey requires location sharing to be enabled.¹⁸⁶

For each shift, Aisha is required to pay ShiftKey \$7.97 in fees.¹⁸⁷ For many workers on gig nursing apps, the withdrawal of fees from their paychecks is a surprise. Each day Aisha works, she is required to pay \$3.89 for a "safety fee" (which the platform describes as "costs associated with background checks, drug screens [if applicable], verification of credentials, and fraud detection and prevention"), \$2.14 for occupational accident insurance, and \$1.94 for medical malpractice insurance. It is not clear why these fees are priced per shift, given that nurses do not get background checks or drug screens for each shift.

¹⁸³ At a Nebraska nursing home, this problem of a lack of orientations came to a head in the aftermath of a resident's death. An inspection revealed that a CPR checklist had not been properly administered by staff members on duty (who were working for ShiftKey) and that "ShiftKey does not provide any orientation or training on the facility's policies and procedures." Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Statement of Deficiencies and Plan of Correction: St. Joseph's Villa, Inc.*, Department of Health and Human Services, October 24, 2024, <https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/inspections/pdf/nursing-home/285249/health/complaint-inspection?date=2024-10-24>.

¹⁸⁴ ShiftKey's website recommends that workers arrive early to facilities to "give yourself enough time to [...] orient yourself to the floor, find the supplies, [and] meet the nurse on duty." Such work, however, is unpaid. See "Essential Tips for Independent Professionals Using ShiftKey," ShiftKey, updated January 15, 2026, <https://www.shiftkey.com/resources/blog/essential-tips-for-professionals-using-shiftkey>.

¹⁸⁵ It's also a game. In January 2026, ShiftKey offered some workers a \$40 gift card during bad weather. In March 2026, ShiftKey offered workers one sweepstakes entry for every shift they worked; the grand prize was a \$3,000 gift card.

¹⁸⁶ One worker received the following reminder from ShiftKey: "Sharing your ETA with facilities is required to confirm arrival, support accurate shift resolution, and ensure payments are processed quickly."

¹⁸⁷ In 2024, these fees totaled \$6. See Wells and Ustek Spilda, "Uber for Nursing."

In addition to these fees, ShiftKey charges workers to access their payments if the worker chooses to do so through a ShiftKey Wallet account or a debit card. Aisha would be charged \$2.95 per shift if she elected to use the ShiftKey Wallet, which offers instant access to her earnings immediately after a shift. If she used a debit card, she would instead pay \$2.99 or 2 percent (whichever is greater) of her total pay for each shift. In that case, a ShiftKey nursing assistant who worked an eight-hour shift at an hourly rate of \$23.25 would pay a total of \$11.69 in access fees.¹⁸⁸

Aisha has little recourse. She is not considered an employee who would be guaranteed a minimum wage. Most workers like Aisha are also prevented from litigating workplace problems as part of a class-action lawsuit because nursing platforms use arbitration clauses in their contracts.¹⁸⁹ A scant few have filed suits against nursing platforms or the clinical facilities that use nursing platforms for misclassification.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ A worker who earned \$23.25 would be charged a flat rate of \$7.97 for the shift in addition to 2 percent of the total earnings (which, for eight hours, would be \$186). The flat fee of \$7.97 plus the 2 percent of \$186 (or \$3.72) equals \$11.69.

¹⁸⁹ See for example *Goston v. Froedtert TheaCare Health, Inc.*, No. 24-cv-1482-bhl (E.D. Wis. June 23, 2025), <https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/wisconsin/wiedce/2:2024cv01482/109894/36/0.pdf>.

¹⁹⁰ See for example *Organ v. CareStat!, Inc. Dba CareRev*, No. 24-cv-017914 (Cal. Super. Ct. Sacramento Cnty. September 9, 2024), <https://lebelaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2024.09.09-CareRev-Conformed-Complaint.pdf>.