

Provider Wellness: How to Focus on Self-Care While Caring for Others

Anya S. Koutras, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.

Associate Professor of Family Medicine

University of Vermont

Disclosures

I have no relevant financial relationships to disclose or conflicts of interest to resolve.

I will discuss no unapproved or off-label pharmaceuticals.

Objectives

- Consider the importance of provider wellness and how it is impacted by the prevalence of provider burnout
- Describe the signs and list the most common causes of burnout for medical providers
- Discuss tools for prevention of burnout with emphasis on meaningful practice



- " To create one's own world takes courage."
 - ~Georgia O'Keefe

Why did you become a
doctor (or APP)?

Help others

Make a difference in the community

Love of science and medicine

Others encouraged you to

Role models

Professional independence

To be your best

What makes an awesome or
even good doctor (APP)?

- Good listener
- Smart
- Have resources (medical home)
- Knows YOU
- Healthy and happy themselves
- Role model of health
- Passionate about their work (love what they do!)

What currently brings you
JOY in your work?

- Appreciation from patients, students and colleagues.
- The connection to my patients, students and colleagues.
- Feeling that my work makes a difference with individuals and community.
- The curiosity and opportunity to continuously learn new things.
- Having time with my family and loved ones.
- Having time with myself.
- Seeing myself as a role model.

Defining Burnout

- Exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Lack of Efficacy

“

Burnout is an erosion of the soul caused by a deterioration of one's values, dignity, spirit and will.

”

Christinea Maslach, University of San Francisco, 1970s

(Maslach Burnout Inventory, 1981)

Prevalence of Burnout

- One in every three physicians is experiencing burnout at any given time.
- A survey of over 7,000 physicians (Mayo Clinic Proceedings, 2017) reported that 1 in 50 planned to leave medicine altogether in the next 2 years, while 1 in 5 planned to reduce clinical hours over the next year.
- In that same survey, 46% of the responders reported at least one burnout symptom.
- In 2017, volume of medical school applications **dropped**, by 14,000 (AAMC) - with predictions of staggering physician shortage by 2030.

Consequences of Burnout

- Medical errors, less quality care, more unnecessary referrals and testing, longer (and more expensive) recovery times, and lower patient satisfaction
- Reduced physician productivity, increased physician turnover, less patient access, increased health care cost overall
- Poor self-care, increase in alcohol and substance use, increase in motor vehicle accidents, increase in depression and suicidality among physicians

Top Causes of Burnout

- **The practice of clinical medicine.** We take care of hurt, sick, scared, dying people and their families, every day. We witness and help with the most difficult and challenging aspects of our communities.
- **Your specific job.** Limited or even lack of resources for patients, third party interference with treatment plans, electronic health record issues, patient population quality measures and other non-direct patient care related stressors in our work weigh us down naturally.
- **Having a life.** We don't live in bubbles and we are accountable to others (and ourselves) outside of our work. We've been trained since medical school to do this "when time allows."
- **The conditioning of our medical education.** "The patient comes first." Many of us have not learned, seen modeled or have practiced how to **FIRST** take care of ourselves outside and inside of our work to do a better job of putting the patient first.

"The physician's duty is not to stave off death or return patients to their old lives, but to take into our arms a patient and family whose lives have disintegrated and work until they can stand back up and face, and make sense of, their own existence."

~

"There is a moment, a cusp, when the sum of gathered experience is worn down by the details of living. We are never so wise as when we live in this moment."

Paul Kalanithi

When Breath Becomes Air

2016

How do we improve our day to day lives in medicine?

- Acknowledgement – that our work is important but also stressful and exhausting. Caring for ourselves is essential.
- Gratitude – that we are skilled and able to practice medicine and that when we participate in meaningful care, that is an honor.
- Community – to know we are not alone, in our mundane and exciting tasks. Connecting with others gives us opportunity to ignite our passion in medicine.

How do you
do reduce the
exhaustion of your
work?

- Use voice recognition software or a scribe.
- Write shorter notes.
- Share templates and shortcuts with colleagues.
- **Participate in meaningful medicine (VCHIP).**
- Set boundaries on "work time".
- Prioritize and schedule time for mindfulness and connection with self and others EVERY DAY.
- Set up calendar to include personal days, vacations, dates, and other joyful events.
- Start a bucket list.
- Ask yourself what brings you joy and make time for it.
- Keep yourself healthy. Address issues with sleep, general and mental health.

What practices or activities do you include in your own self-care?

- Meditation
- Journaling
- Yoga
- Walking, running or hiking
- Biking, martial arts, rowing
- Other forms of exercise
- Painting or other forms of art
- Music – playing or listening
- Cooking
- Travel
- Volunteer work

Mindfulness
Group Activity
followed by
Joyful Group Activity

- "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response, lies our growth and freedom."
- ~Victor Frankl

Reflections on Group Activity

“

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention...A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.

”

~ Rachel Naomi Remen

References

- Drummond D. Physician Burnout: It's Origin, Symptoms, and Five Main Causes. *Fam Pract Manag.* 2015 Sep-Oct;22(5):42-47
- Schattner E. The Physician Burnout Epidemic: What it Means for Patients and Reform. *The Atlantic.* 2012 Aug
- Xu R. The Burnout Crisis in American Medicine. *The Atlantic.* 2018 May
- Remen RN. Recapturing the soul of medicine. *West J Med.* 2001; 174:4-5
- Cho J. Healing the Healer: Why Physicians and Medical Professionals Must Practice Self-Care. *Forbes.* 2016 Mar
- West CP, Dyrbye LN. Physician Burnout: Contributors, consequences and solutions. *Journal of Internal Medicine.* 283(6), 516-529, 2018.

Websites

- www.mindgarden.com
- www.mindfulnessexercis.com
- www.thehappy.md.com
- www.rishiprograms.org
- www.stepsforward.org/modules/physician-burnout
- www.wellmd.stanford.edu
- www.kripalu.org/resources/physician-heal-thyself
- www.canyonranch.com

Local Resources

- Evolution Yoga – Burlington, VT; have continuing education trainings for healthcare professionals
- UVM Mindfulness Center – Burlington, VT
- Center for Mindful Learning – Burlington, VT
- Laura Mann Integrative Healthcare Lecture Series – Burlington, VT
- Sangha Studio – Burlington, VT; meditation series, workshops for health care professionals

Phone/watch apps

- Mindbody
- Calm
- Headspace
- Yoga Studio
- Insight Timer
- Meditation Studio
- Luminosity

Nature

- Free
- Availability
- Can be enjoyed alone or with others
- Benefits for body, mind and soul
- Benefits memory, immune system
- "Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet."
 - ~Thich Nhat Hanh

Thank you.

Questions?

Anya.koutras@med.uvm.edu

