

Reversing physician burnout, using nine strategies to promote well-being

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Credit: Petr Kratochvil/public domain

Researchers at Mayo Clinic have been documenting the rise and costs of physician burnout for more than a decade. Now, they are proposing nine strategies that health care organizations can use to reverse the trend and limit the risk to patients and their medical staff. Tait Shanafelt, M.D., director of Mayo Clinic's Program on Physician Well-being, and John

Noseworthy, M.D., president and CEO, Mayo Clinic, offer the nine-point plan in the current issue of *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

"Research has shown that more than half of U.S. physicians are experiencing symptoms of burnout, and the rate is increasing," says Dr. Shanafelt, first author of the article. "Unfortunately, many organizations see burnout as a personal problem to be addressed by the individual physician. It is clear, however, that burnout is a system issue, and addressing it is the shared responsibility of both the individuals and [health care organizations](#)."

"The reasons we need to reverse this trend in physician burnout are compelling," says Dr. Noseworthy. "Professional exhaustion and disillusionment can adversely impact clinical performance, and result in medical errors and decreased quality of care. This situation hurts patients and providers, and we need to fix it."

The organizational impact of physician burnout can include lower productivity, staff turnover, decreased quality of care and malpractice suits. For the individual physician, burnout can lead to broken relationships, alcoholism and suicide.

The nine strategies suggest organizations should begin to resolve burnout by:

1. Acknowledging and assessing the problem
2. Recognizing the behaviors of leaders that can increase or decrease burnout
3. Using a systems approach to develop targeted interventions to improve efficiency and reduce clerical work
4. Cultivating community at work
5. Using rewards and incentives strategically
6. Assessing whether the organizations actions are aligned with the

stated values and mission

7. Implementing organizational practices and policies that promote flexibility and work-life balance
8. Providing resources to help individuals promote self-care
9. Supporting organizational science (Study the factors in your own institution that contribute to the problem, and invest in solutions.)

The article details how these strategies have been applied at Mayo Clinic and their effect on physician burnout. The authors conclude that "deliberate, sustained and comprehensive efforts by the organization to reduce burnout and promote engagement can make a difference".

The article ends with a clear challenge that there is much work to be done to address the problem of physician burnout nationally.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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