Physician Well-being

What is it?
Why do we care about it?
How do we enhance it?

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What is physician well-being?

- Defined differently in different studies
- Is it satisfaction with current job?
- Is it absence of burnout?
- Is it “feeling good” or balanced?
Six areas of work life have been associated with work satisfaction or burnout

- Workload
- Control
- Reward
- Community
- Fairness
- Values

These areas have been assessed in two recent studies:

Leiter MP, Maslach C. J Health Hum Serv Adm 1999 21 (4) 472–89
Faculty Forward AAMC study

- Survey of 9,638 full-time faculty from 23 US medical schools

- Global satisfaction levels were high (71.3% to 63.5%) and for whether they would again choose to work at their medical school (70.2%)

- Not significantly different for junior versus senior faculty

Predictors of Workplace Satisfaction for US Medical School Faculty, Bunton et al. Academic Medicine, May 2012
C–Change study

- Survey of 2,381 faculty who were from a stratified random sample from 26 U.S. medical schools
- 14% had seriously considered leaving their institution in the past year
- 21% had seriously considered leaving academic medicine altogether because of dissatisfaction

Why are a quarter of faculty considering leaving academic medicine? Pololi et al. Academic Medicine July 2012
So if we look at satisfaction

- Is the glass half-empty (so many faculty in academic medicine want to leave)

- Or is it half-full (the majority of faculty in academic medicine are happy)

- Or is the question instead: are there reasons besides attrition that we care about faculty (and resident and student) happiness?
WELL-BEING

- How would you rate well-being in your colleagues?
- How do you rate well-being in yourself?
- Do you have concerns about your well-being?
What predicted happiness?

- Consistency between actions of the department or school and the stated mission or values of the school
- Transparency of how decisions were made
- These speak to the issues of reward, community, fairness and values

Predictors of Workplace Satisfaction for US Medical School Faculty, Bunton et al. Academic Medicine, May 2012
If it is about absence of burn-out

Burnout is a work–related syndrome including

- Emotional exhaustion
- Cynicism and depersonalization
- Reductions in personal accomplishment and effectiveness

Burn-out is common

- A survey of 7288 physicians using the Maslach Burnout Inventory
- 48% of the MDs reported at least 1 symptom of burnout, 37.9% reported burnout
- This is higher than a comparison of 3442 working US adults at 27.8% (p<.001)
- Physicians are also less satisfied with work–life balance (40.2% versus 23.2%, p<.001)

Do you notice signs of burnout in your colleagues, residents or students?

Have you noticed signs of burnout in yourself?

Have you ever felt burned out?
Why does it matter?

- We may become less empathic if we are burned out.
- In a study of 2682 medical students from 7 US medical schools,
  higher burnout scores were associated with lower student empathy scores and lower professionalism climate scores.
- Brazeau, Schroeder, Rovi, Boyd. Relationship between medical student burnout, empathy and professionalism climate. Academic Medicine, October 2010 supplement.
We may become less professional and less altruistic

- Cross-sectional study of 2566 students at 7 medical schools
- 52.8% of the students reported burnout
- Those with burnout had more self-reported unprofessional conduct and less altruistic professional values

Dyrbe, Massie, Eacher, et al. Relationship between burnout and professional conduct and attitudes among US medical students JAMA 2010, 304:1173–1180
We may get injured

- Study of 340 internal medicine residents at Mayo Clinic 2007 through 2011
- “Diminished quality of life, burnout, and positive screening for depression, fatigue, and sleepiness were EACH associated with statistically significantly increased odds of reporting a motor vehicle accident in the subsequent 3 months.”

A study of 667 Canadian nurses

Value conflicts and inadequate rewards were the major factors associated with burnout

The factor of burnout associated with turnover was cynicism

Work life predicted burnout which predicted turnover

Leiter MP, MasLach C J of Nursing Management, 2009, 17, 331–339
What defines work/life balance for you?
Are you satisfied with your work/life balance?
Is your family satisfied?
If the key is feeling balanced

- A study of 7197 surgeons in the United States
- Work/home conflicts predicted burnout, depression, alcohol abuse/dependency
- Factors which independently increased the risk for work/home conflicts were
  - Hours worked per week
  - Having children
  - Being female
  - And work location (academic or VA)

Dyrbye, Freishlag, Kaups, et. al. Work–Home Conflicts have a substantial impact on career decisions that affect the adequacy of the surgical workforce. Arch Surg 2012 147 (10): 933–939
So, what helps?

- Study of 70 primary care physicians in Rochester, NY
- Mindfulness meditation, self-awareness exercises, narratives about meaningful clinical experiences, appreciative interviews, didactics, and discussion.
- 8-week intensive phase (2.5 h/wk, 7-hour retreat) followed by a 10-mo maintenance phase (2.5 h/mo).
- Participation was associated with short-term and sustained improvements in well-being and attitudes associated with patient-centered care.

- Krasner, Epstein, Beckman et al. Association of an educational program in mindful communication with burnout, empathy, and attitudes about primary care physicians. JAMA 2009 302:1284–1293
Increase resilience

- 1321 medical students at 5 schools studied longitudinally
- 36.3% did not report burn-out and were considered resilient
- Resilient students were less likely to report depression, had a higher quality of life, and experienced less stress and fatigue – so better well-being
- Modifiable factors included that resilient students were less likely to be employed, reported fewer stressful life events and higher levels of social support, and perceived their learning climate more positively (all p< 0.05)

22 physicians participated in an ongoing study over 5 years.
Interventions targeted increasing physician control over the work environment, order in the clinical setting, and clinical meaning.
Well-being improved: Emotional and work-related exhaustion decreased significantly (Maslach Burnout Inventory, p = 0.002).
Quality Work Competence, a measure of organizational health, significantly improved initially and remained acceptable and stable during the rest of the study. (p = 0.035).

Do the work which is most meaningful to you

- 465 member of internal medicine faculty
- 68% reported patient care, 19% research, 9% education and 3% administration as the aspect of work they found most meaningful
- 34% of faculty members met the criteria for burnout
- Those spending less than 20% of their time (approximately 1 d/wk) on the activity that is most meaningful to them had higher rates of burnout (53.8% vs 29.9%; P<.001).
- Time spent on the most meaningful activity was the largest predictor of burnout

Interventions

- Identify what is meaningful to you in your job and do that at least a day a week
- Create a community at work, with positive interpersonal interactions
- Change the work environment to reward people for good work and be clear about the goals
- Learn techniques to reduce stress and to be “present” with patients, so as to get more satisfaction
- Seek a balance between work and home

MINDFULNESS

- Opening one’s attention to an event or experience
- Attending to both cognitive and emotional responses
- Non-judgemental self-monitoring
- Adds vividness and clarity
- Adds a deeper, more complex understanding
REFLECTION

- Explores experiences to gain new understanding and appreciation
- Gives meaning to experiences
- Connects experiences to professionalism, humanism, and critical thinking
- Reflective writing makes the inchoate coherent
- Provides emotionally powerful context
- Discovers meaning and purpose
- May provide new perspectives
HOW WILL YOU ENHANCE WELL-BEING

- Change your job?
- Change the way you do your job?
- Adopt mindful and/or reflective practices?
- Make no changes?
Suggestions

- Add humor and laughter into your life
- Choose to live less financially affluently
- Plan a daily self-care activity (exercise, massage, spiritual practice, time with friends)

Nedrow, Steckler, Hardman, Physician resilience and burnout: can you make the switch? Family Practice Management 2013
Finding meaning in our work

- For most of us, it is in the patient care
- Take care of yourself so you can better care for others
- Teach that to medical students and residents
- And model happiness, as well as humanistic care of patients!