

## 5 things institutions can do to prevent resident burnout

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Physician burnout is a pressing issue, but we've heard from readers that avoiding burnout goes beyond taking charge of one's own wellness. The institutions in which medical students, residents and physicians learn and work need to help them build resilience as well.

A perspective piece in the March issue of the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* examined the trainee perspective on current resources that support resident wellness. It's no secret that physicians in training are at increased risk for depression as compared to their peers, but many physician wellness tips are focused on what trainees can personally do in their lives to help avoid depression and burnout rather than focusing on their environment.

The piece admits that some of the negative aspects of physician training cannot be changed, such as the physical and emotional challenges, the enormous workload and trainees' failures, despite their best efforts. But institutions can do more to help residents achieve wellness in optimal learning environments, and the piece identifies changes programs can make to do this.

According to the article authors, several of whom are residents and fellows, here are the five things institutions can do to promote wellness in their programs:

- **Destigmatize and raise awareness about depression during training.** Discussing depression at orientation and during regular meetings and retreats can bring the topic to the forefront. For example, when New York University discovered surgical residents didn't recognize the early warning signs of depression in their peers, the school held a seminar on the topic. The program employed video clips, a standardized patient-actor and time for self-reflection.
- **Build systems to confidentially identify and treat depression.** Trainees should have access to confidential mental health service and wellness programs that offer extended hours to accommodate their work schedules, such as the program at Oregon Health and Science University. With such programs, a resident who may be reluctant to seek intervention still has access to nonjudgmental dialogue and support.

- **Establish a more formal system of peer and faculty mentoring.** Encouraging mentorship by pairing junior and senior residents at the start of residency could help decrease stressors and build camaraderie. Having a peer to talk to about overcoming day-to-day hardships can be a vital source of support.
- **Promote a supportive culture during training.** Trainees spend most of their time in the clinical setting, so residency naturally creates a family and community. An environment that acts as a safety net of support can be a major contributor to wellness.
- **Foster efforts to learn more about resident wellness.** Institutions need to uphold resident wellness efforts, and more study should be done to better understand problem areas and highlight best practices, the perspective piece said.

For more on physician wellness, visit *AMA Wire*®, and watch for details about an upcoming Tweet chat that addresses physician trainee wellness at the institutional level.

**Tell us:** What does your institution do to help trainees avoid burnout? In an ideal world, what support services would you like to see?