

Preventing burnout in medical residents and fellows: 6 keys for wellness

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What's just as important to the wellness of physician trainees as a supportive work environment? According to a new expert-authored solution for preventing resident and fellow burnout, tools to develop personal well-being also should be an essential part of residency programs. Learn the six key aspects for resident and fellow well-being and some of the tools programs should provide to help their trainees thrive.

A multifaceted concept

Wellness is more than the absence of physical ailments. For physicians in training who have a multitude of pressures and responsibilities bearing down on them, it's important to be mindful of the various components that contribute to overall well-being.

A new online module in the AMA's STEPS Forward™ collection explains what is needed to prevent burnout among physician trainees, based on lessons learned by successful residency wellness programs. To foster true personal wellness, residents' needs must be met in these key areas:

- **Nutrition.** Despite hectic and often irregular schedules, residents need healthful food options and scheduled time to eat. Physician authors of the STEPS Forward module suggest that once residency programs have formed a wellness team, a focus point for the team should be ensuring that residents have nutritious food available while they are on the job.
- **Fitness.** Staying physically active is an important key to supporting good health, but it can be tough to do with all the demands placed on residents' time. The module recommends that training programs should make sure residents have free access to a gym that is located in or near the medical center to remove some of the barriers to staying fit.
- **Emotional health.** Residency programs should support wellness tactics that residents can apply on an individual level, including identifying personal and professional conflicts, nurturing relationships, and practicing mindfulness-based stress-reduction techniques. The

module advises that the wellness team should encourage trainees and empower them to seek and offer help as needed. Another suggestion is to develop a physician support group for trainees and faculty members.

- **Preventive care.** As a medical professional, you know the importance of preventive care for keeping patients healthy. But do you take the time to make sure you're getting the well care you need, such as keeping regular appointments with your primary care physician and dentist? The module recommends that program leadership commit to giving trainees an occasional weekday afternoon off for personal meetings or their own doctor appointments.
- **Financial health.** As a resident, you most likely have a limited income, massive med school debt and maybe even a growing family to support. Making sure that you're financially secure in your day-to-day activities and prepared for unexpected events is an important part of maintaining peace of mind and ensuring future wellness. The module suggests that one way residency programs can help trainees with financial health is to bring in a financial counselor for informal discussions with interested residents.
- **Mindset and behavior adaptability.** Understanding *how* to thrive in your environment is essential. The module advises that residency programs help their trainees learn techniques to adapt their daily routine around factors that are outside of their control, such as their work schedules.

Make wellness at your program a priority

If your training program doesn't have a successful wellness program in place, the AMA STEPS Forward module offers five concrete steps to create a wellness culture for residents and fellows. It also provides wellness assessment tools, case studies of successful wellness programs for trainees and suggestions for wellness activities.

Additional resources to help boost your personal well-being

- Learn five tips for eating healthy on a budget, offered by a medical trainee and registered dietician.
- Access a variety of expert financial advice for physicians, from managing medical school debt to planning for retirement.
- Read about the ways residents have found to conquer burnout.
- Discover three key tips for physicians in medical marriages to strengthen your connection with your partner as your career and relationship progress.