

# How Henry Ford Hospital is working to prevent physician burnout

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Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit has found in surveys that its physicians report slightly lower rates of burnout compared with the national average. But physicians' levels of distress were still too high, especially for new physicians.

To improve physician well-being, Henry Ford Hospital Director of Physician Wellness Lisa MacLean, MD, has led implementation of several physician burnout prevention strategies since taking on the role in early 2017.

"Isn't it awful that so many people are in distress? We should not necessarily be excited about the fact that it is not any different than the national average," said Dr. MacLean, a psychiatrist and AMA member. "We should look at that and say, 'We want 0 percent of our physicians to be in distress—both nationally and locally.'"

Here are two areas of early focus put in place to help prevent physician burnout at Henry Ford Hospital, an AMA group member.

**Establish a culture of caring.** This means that the organization's values, behaviors and leadership demonstrate caring, support and compassion. Patient well-being is at the center of this approach to organizational culture. This is because, according to Dr. MacLean, to have patient well-being there must be physician vitality—happiness, self-worth, self-efficacy, and personal and work satisfaction.

Henry Ford Hospital's executive leaders have recognized the importance of physician well-being, which led to the creation of a task force and advisory committee devoted to the issue.

To further understand the hospital's culture, Dr. MacLean asked questions, listened and worked with other people within the organization who already cared about physician burnout. Focus groups with physicians helped reveal a lot of pain points and causes of physician distress.

“Every culture is different. Therefore, every program needs to align with that specific culture,” said Dr. MacLean.

**Create meaning in work.** This is another area of focus at Henry Ford, and their program includes resilience skills, and behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate physical, emotional and professional well-being. One example is a wellness course catalog that lists about 30 different lectures developed by Dr. MacLean—she has led 36 lectures since March 2017.

Topics include physician burnout, the healing properties of being a doctor, creating a culture of caring and support, teamwork, and improving physician resiliency for busy doctors.

Another solution is monthly wellness rounds, which have seen 100–150 attendees each session. These rounds cover various topics on physician burnout and well-being. Presented by Dr. MacLean or another speaker, physicians, residents and faculty can enjoy a free lunch while learning about different topics.

And because Henry Ford identified the most at-risk population to be newer physicians (those with five years or less at the hospital), orientation includes a talk about resilience. This helps to create a healthy team culture, but also provides tools and resources important for new physicians at Henry Ford.

Henry Ford is also working on a peer mentor program. Physicians who have been identified as up-and-coming leaders will be trained to become peer mentors and coaches to all new physicians. The one-year program helps provide support for new physicians to ensure success and create meaning in work.

Looking to the future, Dr. MacLean hopes to complete a practice redesign based on burnout drivers, give physicians a greater voice in decisions, link well-being to key organization objectives and create system-level interventions.

AMA’s STEPS Forward™ is an open-access platform featuring more than 50 modules that offer actionable, expert-driven strategies and insights supported by practical resources and tools. Based on best practices from the field, STEPS Forward modules empower practices to identify areas or opportunities for improvement, set meaningful and achievable goals, and implement transformative changes designed to increase operational efficiencies, elevate clinical team engagement, and improve patient care.



Several modules have been developed from the generous grant funding of the federal Transforming Clinical Practices Initiative (TCPI), an effort designed to help clinicians achieve large-scale health transformation through TCPI's Practice Transformation Networks.

The AMA, in collaboration with TCPI, is providing technical assistance and peer-level support by way of STEPS Forward resources to enrolled practices. The AMA is also engaging the national physician community in health care transformation through network projects, change packages, success stories and training modules.