

AMA seeks more data on physician, medical student suicide

NOV 13, 2018

Brendan Murphy

Senior News Writer

Citing the high rate of suicide completion among medical professionals when compared with the general population and work-related stress as a risk factor for doctors, the AMA House of Delegates (HOD) has called for a better understanding of patterns linked to physician suicide.

Long work hours are commonly cited as a reason for the prevalence of mental illness and burnout among physicians and medical students, but additional institutional factors can contribute to suicide.

One study, cited in a resolution to the HOD presented by the AMA Resident and Fellow Section, found that about 50 percent of residents and fellows had been subjected to workplace bullying from peers.

To address suicide among physicians and trainees, the HOD directed the AMA to: "request that the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education collect data on medical student, resident and fellow suicides to identify patterns that could predict such events."

"Studies have shown that physicians face a higher rate of suicide than any profession in the United States. While we have been working hard to reduce burnout and increase access to mental health services for physicians and medical students, it is imperative that we also work toward fully understanding the problem," said AMA Board Member Ryan J. Ribeira, MD, MPH.

"We believe that collecting data on the incidence of suicide among physicians-in-training will help us identify the systemic factors that contribute to this problem, and ultimately save lives," Dr. Ribeira said.

At the 2019 AMA Annual Meeting, the AMA will introduce a report on the most efficient and accurate mechanism to study the actual incidence of medical student, resident and physician suicide with recommendations for action.