9 major institutions create healthier environment for physicians

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About half of physicians report at least one symptom of burnout, which is nearly twice the rate of other American workers. As burnout continues to receive growing attention, more health care organizations and institutions are searching for solutions to improve physician well-being. This year, nine institutions stood out for their commitment to preventing and alleviating physician burnout.

Committed to making physician burnout a thing of the past, the AMA has studied, and is currently addressing, issues causing and fueling physician burnout—including time constraints, technology and regulations—to better understand the challenges physicians face.

The AMA offers CME on physician burnout that can help you prevent physician burnout, create the organizational foundation for joy in medicine, create a strong team culture and improve physician resiliency. Meanwhile, the AMA’s STEPS Forward™ open-access platform offers innovative strategies that allow physicians and their staff to thrive in the new health care environment.

Here are nine major institutions that worked to create a healthier environment for physicians in 2018.

**Mayo Clinic used group meetings improve well-being.** With research linking professional burnout to higher rates of physician turnover, this preeminent name in American medicine has discovered that part of the solution lies in a little coffee talk. Mayo Clinic found that giving physicians a way to gather in small groups for semistructured, private discussions in restaurants, coffee shops or reserved rooms results in measurably lower burnout and social isolation, and higher well-being and job satisfaction.

**Stanford Medicine physicians bank overtime for later.** Inspired by the idea of faculty trading favors with colleagues to meet the time demands of work and home, time banking for doctors began as a two-year study at Stanford University School of Medicine to help improve physicians’ lives to minimize burnout-induced departures. The idea has since been successfully implemented within the emergency department, changing the culture by increasing physician recognition and improving morale.


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Bellin Health’s team-based care model created 92 percent job satisfaction. This Green Bay, Wisconsin, system’s remarkably high level professional satisfaction can be attributed to the team-based care model. Since implementation in 2014, Bellin Health has seen a significant reduction in burnout across all staff, as well as improvement in patient satisfaction and quality of care. There are now 95 primary care teams using this model in the health system.

Carilion Clinic: Survey results led to seven system changes. Leaders at this Roanoke, Virginia-based system—after finding that nearly three in five physicians reported burnout—have pursued seven innovative ideas and initiatives to address burnout. These range from a central well-being committee to put the issue at the top of the agenda to support for interdepartmental exchange of effective ideas to improve well-being.

Yale: Simpler logins, voice recognition eased click fatigue. To improve physician well-being and prevent burnout, Yale School of Medicine searched for ways to reduce clicks and increase time spent with patients. After looking at the issues and determining the need for a systemwide approach, Yale found ways to reduce clicks and increase time spent with patients.

Henry Ford Hospital created a culture of caring and meaning in work. Through a series of surveys, physicians reported slightly lower rates of burnout compared with the national average. However, levels of distress were still too high, especially for new physicians. So the Detroit hospital implemented several burnout prevention strategies focused on establishing a culture of caring and creating meaning in work. These include “monthly wellness rounds” educational sessions on topics related to physician well-being.

University of Utah Health: Bigger C-suite role put physician well-being atop the agenda. Leaders at University of Utah Health (UUH) initiated a multifaceted assessment to help guide their efforts in addressing burnout. Part of the response came in the form of a chief wellness officer and a faculty co-director of the UUH Resiliency Center meeting individually with leadership from each department within the medical school to identify opportunities for improvement.

Cleveland Clinic addressed barriers to team-based care. This care model can drive increases in physician well-being, but obstacles to team-based care had to first be overcome at Cleveland Clinic. These include patient reluctance, physician apprehension and financial concerns. Learn more about how this famous name in health care has worked to overcome these barriers.

Johns Hopkins: Monthly events eased the stresses of residency. According to a systemwide safety culture survey, about half of the trainees at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine were experiencing symptoms of burnout. Through monthly wellness events and weekly emails, residents and clinical fellows participate in a variety of activities aimed at improving well-being across the campus.