

# How often do physicians and medical students die of suicide?

JUN 12, 2019

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Two in five physicians screen positive for depression and mental health issues, and burnout and other stressors are prominent across the continuum of physician education and practice. Medical students, meanwhile, are three times likelier to die of suicide than their counterparts in the general population, according to data cited in an AMA Council on Medical Education report presented at the 2019 AMA Annual Meeting.

The AMA House of Delegates (HOD) adopted the council report's call for the Association to work to better understand the routine occurrence of burnout, depression and suicide among physicians, residents and medical students.

"It is vitally important that we take action now to fully understand the actual impact of suicide on our physician workforce. Our goal is to have access to data that will help us identify the systemic patterns and risk factors that lead to suicide, and ultimately help us prevent it," said AMA Board Member S. Bobby Mukkamala, MD. "We will continue working to reduce burnout and increase access to mental health services for physicians and physicians-in-training—improving their well-being and leading to better health outcomes for their patients."

The AMA will:

- Explore the viability and cost-effectiveness of regularly collecting National Death Index (NDI) data and confidentially maintaining manner of death information for physicians, residents, and medical students listed as deceased in the AMA Physician Masterfile for long-term studies.
- Monitor progress by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education to collect data on medical student and resident or fellow suicides to identify patterns that could predict such events.
- Support the education of faculty members, residents and medical students in the recognition of the signs and symptoms of burnout and depression and support access to free, confidential, and immediately available stigma-free mental health and substance use disorder services.

- Collaborate with other stakeholders to study the incidence of and risk factors for depression, substance misuse and addiction, and suicide among physicians, residents and medical students.