

# How one health system uses mentoring to help new physicians succeed

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**Sara Berg**

Senior News Writer

Moving from residency to physician practice can be a stressful transition, which can contribute to burnout. Even taking measures to prepare for that transition can leave a vague sense of unease in many new physicians. But one health system is making strides to ensure new physicians are set up for success through mentoring.

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 and reduce the challenges physicians face. By focusing on factors causing burnout at the system-level, the AMA assesses an organization's well-being and offers guidance and targeted solutions to support physician well-being and satisfaction.

Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group (MAPMG)—a health system based in Rockville, Maryland, composed of 1,500 physicians serving about 750,000 patients annually—aims to help new physicians feel at home with a shared-success mentoring program. This helps to enculture new physicians into the organization's values, making them feel comfortable in their new environment, preventing burnout and increasing collegiality.

“What we try to do as shared-success mentors is provide a filter around them and help turn some of the negatives into positives, connecting them with the solutions, linking them to friendly faces and informational resources, giving them a better experience and helping them to reach happier decisions,” MAPMG Medical Education Program Manager Jonathan Holland said at the 2019 American Conference on Physician Health. The meeting was co-sponsored by the AMA, Mayo Clinic and Stanford Medicine.

Since 2014, more than 500 physicians have graduated from the nine-month program. About 150 mentees join the program each year and more than 20 groups meet monthly across the Maryland health system. While group and one-on-one meetings happen monthly, mentors and mentees can connect on their own as needed. New physicians join preexisting groups as they are hired, which

allows for doctors with varying levels of experience in the organization to help each other.

During a presentation at the conference, Holland outlined how shared-success mentors help new physicians feel welcome.

## Day-to-day tips

Shared-success mentors go beyond just the day-to-day workflow. They socialize with new physicians to help them integrate into the organization. Mentors also help teach the organization's culture and values to emphasize what is important, such as the patient experience.

"Not only did we give the patient excellent care, but the patient walked away feeling like they got excellent care. That's critical for us," said Holland, adding that they "try to impart those values on our mentees" to provide "overall positioning for the new hire physicians."

Mentors also share who to talk to, such as when to go to the chief versus the human resources consultant. And if the new physician needs help with the electronic health record, mentors guide doctors on how to help make using it less burdensome.

## Lending an ear

Everyone needs a friendly ear to talk to. A mentor is there to listen and provide advice when needed. Physicians can also bounce ideas off their mentor for feedback. Together they can work on professional development opportunities and help the new physician build skills to enhance the work environment. Whether the goal is to achieve work-life balance or maintain personal well-being as a busy physician, the mentor is there to help.

MAPMG is primarily a physician-led organization, so if someone would like to become a leader one day, said Holland, they can have a mentor who has succeeded in the organization. This physician can provide ways to increase visibility, make a good impression and share development opportunities the doctor might not be aware of.

## Networking

"It is important to feel at home in your workplace, feel connected to people and have friendly faces

you see every day,” said Holland. “Just knowing people at your workplace and being connected creates good feelings and helps you feel more at home there.”

Each mentor will provide a range of support customized based on the needs of each new physician that has joined the organization. Together they can create a positive atmosphere that encourages growth and support to reduce burnout and stress.

“This program is something that is a relatively small investment, but an important one,” he said. “We can have a really strong impact on new physicians, make them feel welcome in the organization and make them feel like they’re part of the family.”