Health and well-being are key concepts throughout medical school. Those concepts take on a new level of import, however, at the outset of residency. Once resident physicians begin their graduate medical education, longer hours and increased responsibility can lead to burnout.

New residents can glean insights on stress management and the signs of burnout in a course—“Thriving Through Residency: The Resilient Resident”—offered through the AMA GME Competency Education Program.

With contributions by subject-matter experts from around the country, the program offerings include more than 25 courses that residents can access online, on their own schedule. Among the experts are several who contributed to the AMA’s Health Systems Science textbook, which draws insights from faculty at medical schools that are part of the Association’s Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium.

Courses cover five of the six topics—patient care, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, and system-based practice—within the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education’s core competency requirements. The sixth requirement, medical knowledge, is one that is typically addressed during clinical education.

Defining burnout

The course defines burnout as “a psychological syndrome of the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment” associated with workplace stress. Burnout during residency is a fairly common occurrence—one study cited says one-third of the residents felt overburdened by the workload often or most of the time, and 69% rated their work intensity as “high.”
Results of burnout can include medical errors, depression and substance-use disorder among physicians.

**Six pillars of resident wellness**

In an effort to beat burnout, residents need a road map for personal wellness. The course breaks down resident wellness into these six categories.

**Emotional well-being** involves your awareness and acceptance of your feelings and includes the degree that you feel positive and enthusiastic about yourself and life.

**Spiritual well-being** is related to your search for meaning and purpose in human existence—the belief and reliance on something larger than ourselves.

**Physical well-being** goes hand in hand with your need for physical exercise, your desire to learn about diet and nutrition, and your avoidance of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol consumption.

**Social well-being** is the result of maintaining healthy relationships with other people, especially those in your support system. Setting aside time for your relationships—whether with family, friends, a significant other—is important, especially during this challenging phase of your career.

**Financial well-being** involves feeling secure in your day-to-day activities and being prepared for unexpected events.

**Intellectual well-being** involves focusing on expanding your overall knowledge and skills, as well as your creativity.

Visit AMA GME Competency Education Program for more information or to request a demo.