With physician burnout soaring, 28 health care organizations step up

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Physician burnout isn’t a new problem in health care, but the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched doctors and other health professionals to the brink. Two years into this public health emergency, the pandemic pushed U.S. doctor burnout to an all-time high of 63%. But more than two dozen U.S. health systems have risen to the occasion, recognizing just how important it is to reduce physician burnout and improve well-being.

Twenty eight health care organizations, representing more than 80,000 physicians, are being honored in the 2022 AMA Joy in Medicine™ Health System Recognition Program, all earning bronze recognition. This recognition represents the outstanding efforts these organizations have initiated to address the systemic causes of physician burnout in areas such as commitment, assessment, leadership, teamwork, peer support and practice-environment efficiency.

“Health systems that have earned recognition from the AMA’s Joy in Medicine Health System Recognition Program have demonstrated that the well-being of health professionals is essential to caring for the health and wellness of patients, families, and communities,” said AMA President Jack Resneck Jr., MD. “United by a commitment to build a culture of wellness that energizes care teams, the recipients of the Joy in Medicine Recognition are at the forefront and among the best at creating a workplace that makes a difference in the lives of clinical caregivers.”

In 2019—the program’s inaugural year—the AMA honored 22 organizations’ commitment to cutting doctor burnout. The program was paused in 2020 as the country first grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. After that pause, the AMA recognized 44 health systems in 2021 that stepped up as COVID-19 strained the nation’s doctors. These organizations are becoming a network for thought leadership, shared learnings and change agency through AMA convening.

Making a difference in well-being
In 2021, half of health workers reported burnout amid COVID-19, according to a report co-written by researchers from the AMA and Hennepin Healthcare in Minneapolis. While the burnout rates have skyrocketed since, this report also uncovered that feeling valued by one’s organization was strongly associated with lower stress. This serves as a protective factor against work-related physician burnout.

From these findings, organizations have reexamined how leadership, culture, peer support and removing obstacles to patient care act together to create conditions where joy, purpose and meaning in medicine are possible.

Reducing physician burnout is a critical element of the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians.

Far too many U.S. physicians experience burnout. That’s why the AMA develops resources that prioritize well-being and highlight workflow changes so physicians can focus on what matters—patient care.

This year’s recipients join more than 60 organizations representing more than 120,000 physicians recognized by the program since its inception in 2019. The organizations that received recognition in 2022 are:

- Atlantic Health System.
- Baylor Scott & White The Heart Hospital—Plano.
- Centura Health, Centennial.
- The Christ Hospital Health Network.
- Cleveland Clinic.
- Cooper University Health Care.
- Edward-Elmhurst Health.
- Gillette Children’s.
- Hartford HealthCare.
- Johns Hopkins Medicine.
- Medical College of Wisconsin, Froedtert Hospital and Children’s Wisconsin.
- Moffitt Cancer Center.
- MultiCare Health System.
- Nemours Children’s Health.
- Northwell Health Physician Partners.
- Oak Street Health.
- Pediatric Physicians’ Organization at Children’s.
- Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health.
- The Permanente Medical Group.

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The AMA Physician Well-being Program offers physicians and health systems a choice of cutting-edge tools, information and resources to help rekindle a joy in medicine. By focusing on factors causing burnout at the system level, the AMA assesses an organization’s well-being (PDF) and offers guidance and targeted solutions to support physician well-being and satisfaction.

Applications for 2023 recognition will open Jan. 20. Interested organizations will need to complete a self-assessment and attestation according to program criteria. To learn more about applying, organizations can submit an Intent to Apply form to receive additional information and updates. For more information on the Joy in Medicine Recognition Program (PDF), email practice.transformation@ama-assn.org.