INCREASING JOY IN MEDICINE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PHYSICIAN HEALTH™

September 18–20, 2016 | Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel

Conference Report
When physicians suffer, the impact touches nearly every segment of medicine, from how patients experience care and treatment outcomes to higher health care costs. The future of our health care system, not only in the United States but in countries around the world, relies on physicians becoming more attuned to their own health and well-being and recognizing the symptoms of professional burnout in their colleagues.

A joint study by the American Medical Association and the Mayo Clinic last year showed how increased bureaucracy, administrative burdens and poor technological interfaces are contributing to alarming rates of professional burnout among physicians. More than half of U.S. doctors across every state and specialty reported feeling symptoms of burnout, including added stress, fatigue, anxiety and even depression.

Responding to this public health issue the AMA House of Delegates adopted a resolution at its 2016 Annual Meeting to support expanding the “Triple Aim” of health care design—improving patient experience, improving the health of communities and reducing health care costs—to include a fourth tenet focused on improving the work-life balance of physicians and other health care professionals.

The theme of the International Conference on Physician Health™ for 2016, which was co-hosted by the American Medical Association, Canadian Medical Association and the British Medical Association, was “Increasing joy in medicine,” and it served as a natural follow-up to these efforts. In my welcoming address to physicians from around the world, I underscored the point that, as thought-leaders for our noble profession, we have a responsibility to remove the obstacles and solve those challenges that steal time from our patients, undermine quality care and contribute to physician burnout.

This important conference, which took place September 18–20 at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel, provided the perfect opportunity to hear from international thought leaders on the topic of professional burnout and explore the latest research and thinking that can help all of us adapt and thrive in the modern health care landscape.

In the two years before this conference reconvenes in Toronto, my hope is that we continue to raise awareness about the challenges of professional burnout in medicine and recognize the symptoms in those we cherish and in ourselves. By taking steps to promote a positive work environment and achieve a healthy work-life balance, you are making an investment in your career and in the care you can give to others.

Andrew W. Gurman, MD
President, American Medical Association

October 11–13, 2018 | Toronto, Ontario
The event

With its timely theme of “Increasing joy in medicine,” this year’s International Conference on Physician Health™ (ICPH) was, by every measure, a tremendous success. Its record attendance further underscores the continued need for and opportunities associated with a conference focused on physician health, and the issues and solutions connected to topics such as reducing burnout, improving physician work-life satisfaction and making medical practice fulfilling.

Hosts

The International Conference on Physician Health was organized through a collaboration of the American Medical Association, Canadian Medical Association and British Medical Association.
Program overview and key findings

In welcoming more than 450 attendees from around the world to Boston, the 2016 ICPH program provided a multitude of opportunities for physicians and researchers to learn, discuss, network and broaden their horizons.

Through oral presentations, keynotes, workshops, and poster and plenary sessions, an abundance of actionable insights, relevant information and inspiring perspectives were shared with a highly engaged audience. From the physician attendee feedback we received (see “Testimonials and comments” below), the 2016 ICPH scored a direct hit—both in meeting expectations and in advancing the discussion for how to improve physician health in the 21st century.

The research and perspectives presented at this year’s ICPH focused on four primary areas of interest:

- **Burnout** explored what causes burnout in physicians while attendees learned about solutions to decrease burnout’s impact on doctors, their practices and their patients.
- **Innovation** explored creative, novel ways to promote wellness, strengthen personal resilience and combat professional burnout.
- **Individual** taught how to develop a personal action plan to enhance one’s health, job satisfaction and personal resilience.
- **Organizational** taught how to promote a healthy workforce and positive work-life balance—within the health care environment and within the organization—by improving organizational processes, focusing on health and lifestyle modifications, and lowering physical and mental health issue risk factors.

In addition to the wealth of recent scientific information and discussion that the 2016 conference generated, it also offered meaningful continuing medical education recognition as the activity was designated for 15.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™.

We hope this top-line summary of what was shared and learned at the International Conference on Physician Health provides you with a helpful glimpse of the innovative and empowering work we are developing and orchestrating on behalf of physicians—and that you too can be a part of.

**Summation**

While the conference was successful within its three-day scope, prioritizing physician health and well-being in daily practice takes commitment that’s strong, informed and operates on two levels. **Personal commitment** in that we, each and every one of us in the health care profession, take the necessary time required to focus on our own health, and **professional commitment** in that medicine must keep this issue—and the quest for meaningful, actionable solutions—on its agenda front and center.

We hope the 2016 ICPH findings will not only serve as a reminder of the important work and research done, but also continue to push the vital goal of increasing joy in medicine in the years to come.
Facts and statistics

Country representation

Attendance: 450+

Oral presentations/posters/workshops: 135

Overall conference rating:

Summary of attendee evaluations

95.0% of respondents felt the meeting was a valuable use of their time

93.6% of respondents felt the meeting helped them feel engaged

92.9% of respondents will recommend this conference to a colleague

91.5% felt the meeting summarized a wealth of innovative research on how individual/organizations can increase joy in practice while preventing burnout and increasing personal resiliency

89.2% felt the meeting collected and interpreted exciting and innovative ideas from around the world about how physicians can attain an appropriate work-life balance and personal well-being

83.5% felt the meeting internalized strategies and helped build skills to prevent burnout while increasing understanding of the profound role that peer support/fellowship plays during difficult times and during litigation

89.2% felt the meeting developed a renewed spirit and resiliency in order to continue their important work of taking care of themselves, their patients and/or conducting research
In the opening presidential remarks Drs. Andrew Gurman (AMA), Pali Hungin (BMA) and Granger Avery (CMA), welcomed colleagues to Boston, one of America’s most renowned centers of medicine and the perfect backdrop for the 2016 meeting.

Participants started the first day with an inspirational plenary delivered by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, professor of medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, where he founded the world-renown Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic in 1979 and, in 1995, the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society. Dr. Kabat-Zinn’s presentation explored mindfulness-based approaches to reclaiming the satisfaction and joy inherent in the practice of medicine and in life.

Jennifer Steller, PhD, an assistant professor in the psychology department at the University of Toronto, Mississauga, delivered a first-day lecture focusing on positive emotions, not all emotions. Dr. Steller offered a wealth of insight into the impact of an evidence-based approach to exploring positive emotions and why our feelings may have a greater impact on our health and well-being than we expect.

Plenary panelists Lotte Dyrbye, MD; Bill Tierney, MD; Debbie Cohen, OBE, MD; and Genevieve Moinéau, MD, kicked off the second day by highlighting innovative changes—each holding the potential to positively impact physician health in the future—in American, British and Canadian medical school curricula. Each panelist gave an engaging presentation on how gaps in medical training have led to stress and struggles with professional satisfaction. They also showed how medical schools around the world are implementing innovative curricular changes and how those changes are making a difference in the lives of the next generation of physicians.

Jonathan Bush, MBA, the CEO and president of athenahealth, delivered the second day’s afternoon lecture, which focused on the failing state of health care—not just for the patients in the system, but for the very caregivers tasked with delivering outcomes. It’s not just technology, Mr. Bush explained, that is leaving doctors dissatisfied. In examining the range of factors at play, he discussed how technology, in fact, can offer the key to solving many of these challenges. The presentation inspired an open dialogue among the audience about bringing the humanity and joy back to health care.

Opening the last day of the conference Suzie Brown, MD, a congestive heart failure/cardiac transplant specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and a singer-songwriter, delivered an inspirational plenary using music as a backdrop to her presentation. Demonstrating how she handles life as a cardiologist and songwriter, she took the audience through her personal journey that connects both of her passions in meaningful ways.

Christine Sinsky, MD, the vice president of professional satisfaction at the AMA, approached the subject of joy in practice—why it’s missing, why it matters and what can be done. Dr. Sinsky offered a wealth of insight for how to rediscover joy in practice, and how it can be achieved more easily than many physicians realize.

As the perfect bookend to Dr. Kabat-Zinn’s opening remarks, Saki Santorelli, EdD, MA—who is a professor of medicine and the executive director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society and the current director of the acclaimed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School—gave the closing keynote address. Through story, poetry, prose and tastes of mindfulness practice, attendees explored what it means to “take ourselves to heart,” and the radical shift this may bring to the education and training of people dedicated to the service of others.
Testimonials and comments

Conference attendees had the opportunity to respond to their experience by taking an online survey—and they did so in force. More than 32 percent of the participants responded, giving us insight into what worked well and what areas we can focus on in future meetings.

The many positive comments revealed that the majority of physicians left with actionable ways to improve physician health and increase joy in medicine in both their personal and professional lives. Here’s a sampling of what the participants had to say.

“It was all new to me as a surgeon so everything was somewhat eye opening.”

“I liked the energy and even though 1 in 2 doctors are burnt out there seemed to be a consensus that this can be resolved.”

“I appreciated the feedback from health care providers around the world. It was incredible to see that other countries are experiencing the same issues we are here in the United States.”

“Everything—knowledgeable speakers, innovative concepts, collegiality, breakout sessions, conference—really focused on health, wellness and compassion. THANK YOU for giving us this opportunity.”

“Most important to me was the combined focus on physician well-being and a community of attendees passionate about this topic.”

“All of the various specialties in medicine coming together to share ideas and really wanting to help one another. It was inspiring…”

“I really enjoyed the sessions I attended—unfortunately I could only attend for one day, but I thought that the theme was impressively and thoroughly addressed…”

“The keynote and plenary speakers were great and diverse choices! Inspirational in a unique way. The networking and ability to see what others are doing across the world to decrease burnout was fantastic.”

“Hearing from physicians and non-physicians alike, both of which have made significant contributions to physician well-being. Helpful to hear the theory and data that supports well-being and positive psychology.”

“The interest in this meeting shows that the interest in physician health and joy in practice is really gaining traction.”

“Great to be surrounded by people focused on the well-being of other physicians rather than the latest treatments, metric obsession, etc. Just being around that energy was great.”

“The blend of grass roots efforts/research with practical ideas that can be taken back home and implemented.”

“Many physicians from across the globe collaborating and sharing their work. I came away energized and appreciative of the hard work involved in putting the conference together.”

“The best part is meeting various experts and the breadth of presentations and experiences from around the world. Research presentation sessions were great quick snapshots of the scope of work being done.”

“It was my first AMA conference and I have been an MD for 30 years! It was wonderful, energizing in so many ways.”

“Variety of innovative viewpoints and strategies.”

“Ideas discussed that I can take home and use in my own institutions and personal practice.”

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Sponsors and exhibitors

We'd like to thank our premier sponsor:

THE PHYSICIANS FOUNDATION
Empowering Physicians
Improving Healthcare

We'd like to also thank the many exhibitors that helped support the conference and furthered the message and practice of physician health. Following is a complete list of those participants:

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<th>American Medical Association</th>
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Committees

Our thanks to the following individuals for their contribution to the planning and promotion of this conference.

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- Dr. Friedrich Wurst (Austria)
Mark your calendar:

**October 11–13, 2018!**

Plan to join us October 11–13, 2018, in Toronto, Ontario, at the next International Conference on Physician Health, hosted by the CMA. Email [physicianhealthconference@cma.ca](mailto:physicianhealthconference@cma.ca) to receive conference updates.