

# Bozeman Health Takes Small Steps toward a Big Difference in Physician Well-Being

Spotlight: Bozeman Health and the Joy in Medicine™ Health System Recognition Program

When addressing an issue as important as physician burnout, it can be tempting to run full steam ahead, but patience and incremental improvements are more often the keys to long-term success. Bozeman Health's well-being journey exemplifies the importance of making small, purposeful changes when working toward large, organization-wide goals.

Bozeman Health, a community-owned health system, has supported the greater Bozeman, Montana area for more than a century. And yet, a dedicated focus on supporting its health care workforce is a more recent undertaking. Just a few years ago, some physicians at Bozeman Health felt disconnected from their initial call to medicine. Increased administrative tasks and frustrating experiences with their electronic health record (EHR) were coming between physicians and their passion for patient care. As with many health systems across the country, Bozeman Health first tried to address well-being through personal resiliency. *"To take care of other people, we really do need to take care of ourselves,"* explained Melissa R. Reily, MD. The goal was to help physicians become more comfortable facing their own challenges with compassion—the same compassion they give their patients. The health

system brought in a consulting group for resiliency coaching in 2016 that offered voluntary group workshops and confidential coaching for physicians and a resiliency committee was formed. However, they were missing a key component: addressing the systemic drivers of burnout across the organization.

The resiliency committee dissolved after 18 months, but Dr. Reily and colleague Melissa A. Wolf, MD, remained resolute in their mission to improve well-being within the health care staff at Bozeman Health. Dr. Reily and Dr. Wolf met informally every month to continue the conversation and explore opportunities beyond resiliency training. When Mark Williams, MD was appointed chief medical officer several years ago, he learned of their meetings and invited them to formalize their roles in addressing physician burnout and well-being. A system director for physician and APC positions were created, and Drs. Reily and Wolf are now both system directors of physician and APC wellness at Bozeman Health. These two leaders expanded their focus beyond personal resiliency and set out to address well-being from a much broader scope at the organizational level.

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*“As wellness officers, we’re really trying to restore a sense of purpose and meaning.”*

– MELISSA R. REILY, MD

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Dr. Reily and Dr. Wolf leveraged the American Medical Association (AMA) and Joy in Medicine Health System Recognition Program’s evidence-based framework to shape their well-being program. Several AMA resources were used, including the Mini-Z assessment to evaluate burnout. Bozeman Health first began using the survey in 2016 to secure a baseline measurement of burnout and well-being across the organization. AMA STEPS Forward™ toolkits also helped calculate cost savings to present to Bozeman leadership.

Dr. Reily and Dr. Wolf began their work by first demonstrating their commitment to well-being through highly visible changes. These changes included aesthetic improvements to physician lounges and call rooms, and regular food deliveries in an effort to make these rejuvenation spaces more comfortable and satisfying for physicians. Dr. Reily recalls, *“That went a long way for our community... It helped bring attention to our intentions and showed that we really were serious about changing the state of burnout by bringing our community back together and building that support.”* These immediate, visible changes helped the wellness directors gain support and buy-in to tackle even more significant and less visible challenges, such as workflow inefficiencies and task delegation.

Next, Bozeman Health piloted several interventions to reduce administrative tasks and time in the EHRs by focusing specifically on the **Efficiency of Practice Environment** criterion in the AMA Joy in Medicine Health System Recognition Program. This criterion guides organizations to measure “work outside of work,” the time physicians spend charting or updating the EHRs after their regular work hours. Bozeman aims to reduce “work outside of work” by 25% over a 10-month period in primary care and specialty clinics. Some strategies for reduction include presenting brief EHR tips at staff meetings and offering an 8-week

program for physicians to meet every 2 weeks to identify the “pebble in the shoe,” or relatively small nuisances. Physicians collaboratively create solutions, work with their clinical teams to make improvements, and then celebrate these solutions. Interventions to reduce administrative tasks have also helped other clinical staff. Participating nurses’ result notes folder with tasks to act on decreased by about 80% and prescription refills tasks to nurses decreased by about 20%. Bozeman hopes to further expand awareness of these interventions so that others may adopt them as well.

Five years after Bozeman Health first began with small incremental changes in physician well-being, it received recognition from the Joy in Medicine Health System Recognition Program. Bozeman Health continues its efforts to bring meaning, purpose, and joy back to medicine, not only for physicians but also for all health system staff. Supporting the well-being of its workforce will remain a top priority for Bozeman as it continues to care for the patients and community it has supported for over a century.



MELISSA R. REILY (LEFT) AND MELISSA A. WOLF, MD (RIGHT)