

PA CAREER GUIDE

WHAT IS BURNOUT?

- Burnout is a chronic state of being “out of sync” at work: lost energy, enthusiasm, and confidence.
- It is comprised of (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) cynicism and detachment from the job, and (3) reduced sense of personal accomplishment or effectiveness.¹

WHAT CAUSES BURNOUT?

- Contributing factors to the prevalence of burnout include:²⁻⁶
 - Strain on the U.S. healthcare system caused by increased demand for services.
 - Administrative burden from the implementation of electronic health records.
 - Limitations placed on an individual’s scope of practice.

WHO MAY EXPERIENCE BURNOUT?

- All clinicians are at risk for burnout; however, some clinicians in certain specialties may be at higher risk.^{7,8}
- Clinician burnout rates vary; approximately 35% of nurses and 50% of physicians experience burnout, with PAs reporting rates somewhere between these numbers.⁸

HOW DOES BURNOUT AFFECT CLINICIANS AND PATIENTS?

- Clinician burnout is related to negative healthcare and personal outcomes, including but not limited to:
 - Increased rates of medical errors or being named in a malpractice suit.^{9,10}
 - Patient outcomes including healthcare-associated infections, patient mortality within intensive care, and reduced satisfaction.¹¹⁻¹³
 - Increased healthcare costs and clinician turnover.^{14,15}
 - Alcohol abuse, suicidal ideation, depression and anxiety.¹⁶⁻¹⁹

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE BURNOUT?

- Steps to support clinician well-being should occur at the system, team, and individual provider levels.
- Success in system-level reform requires tactics such as:²⁰⁻²³
 - Corporate commitment to system-based interventions.
 - Infrastructure resources.
 - Leadership commitment to well-being.
 - Adoption of strategies that foster interprofessional teamwork and civility, reduce disruptive behavior, and build trust among team members.
 - Building education about wellness and burnout into provider education from entry level through continuing medical education.



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- Team-level reforms include building stronger teams by: ²²
 - Building team “huddles” or other structured communication into every shift or day.
 - Advocating for adequate staffing.
 - Improving electronic medical record efficiency.
 - Creating a positive work and learning environment.
- Support at the individual provider level includes:
 - Access to counseling.
 - Education about coping strategies.
 - Awareness of one’s own personality and temperament.

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NOTE: The following articles provide excellent overviews of the issue.

Dyrbye LN, Shanafelt TD, Sinsky CA, Cipriano PF, Bhatt J, Ommaya A, West CP, Meyers D. Burnout among health care professionals: A call to explore and address this underrecognized threat to safe, high-quality care. *NAM Perspectives. Discussion Paper*, National Academy of Medicine. Published July 5, 2017. Accessed April 3, 2020. doi: 10.31478/201707b

Essary AC, Bernard KS, Coplan, B, Dehn R, Forister JG, Smith NE, Valentin VL. Burnout and job and career satisfaction in the physician assistant profession. A review of the literature. *NAM Perspectives. Discussion Paper*. National Academy of Medicine. December 3, 2018. Accessed April 3, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.31478/201812b>.

Shanafelt TD, Noseworthy JH. Executive Leadership and Physician Well-being: Nine Organizational Strategies to Promote Engagement and Reduce Burnout. *Mayo Clin Proc*. 2017;(92(1): 129-146.

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