



Warning signs you are experiencing physician burnout

Reconsidering how you approach your professional and personal life can save you from unwanted pressure and stress

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Physicians work recklessly day and night keeping their physical, mental, and emotional well-being at stake. The nature of their profession requires them to be readily available to attend their patients even during the late hours. And having continued working after hours and on weekends, they end up feeling emotionally and mentally drained with no time for recovering from work stress and fatigue.

Physician burnout has been a major issue in the medical industry for a long time, and COVID-19 has made the situation even worse.

While heavy workload is considered as one of its major causes, here are some other factors that contribute to high levels of chronic work stress.

- Less to no recognition for their work
- Having no control over excess workload
- Being unable to strike a balance between their personal and professional life
- Rise in computerization of practice resulting in time-consuming administrative tasks such as billing, order entry, etc.

According to Medscape's '2021 Physician Burnout & Suicide Report', women physicians were more prone to burnout compared to male physicians. Also, the greatest incidence of burnout is among physicians who are 45-54 years old, the age group in which work productivity should peak and practices should be stable.

Some of the factors that cause burnout are directly tied to the choice to be a physician:

- **The person:** The tag of being a physician comes with a lot of responsibilities and preconceived notions. People perceive physicians as highly motivated and high-functioning individuals who have solutions for every possible issue. However, they forget that doctors strive to do the best but they don't have much control over the outcome.
- **The place:** Be it working in a big hospital or a small clinic, physicians often feel distracted with a lot of people coming in and out every day. Moreover, this frequent movement doesn't let them enjoy a sense of privacy or have peace of mind during their long working hours.
- **The profession:** Physicians are assumed to be 'super humans' who are good at fixing health issues. For example, a person having sudden cardiac issues at night goes to the physician with the view that he/she will immediately diagnose the situation and give an instant solution for the issue. Now, let's think it from a physician's perspective: imagine how exhausted and overwhelmed they might feel trying to be a problem-solver daily for each of their patients.



Effects

Physician burnout is a chronic process that takes time to develop and show symptoms. However, the sooner you trace the symptoms, the better it is.

It is an actual measurable psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion and can have a substantial impact on the performance of physicians in the following ways:

- Lowers productivity levels
- Reduces the quality of patient care
- Increase in errors

In case, this burnout remains unnoticed and the medical industry and physicians don't collaborate in fighting this issue, it will not only affect the well-being of physicians but will also have a consequential impact on patients.

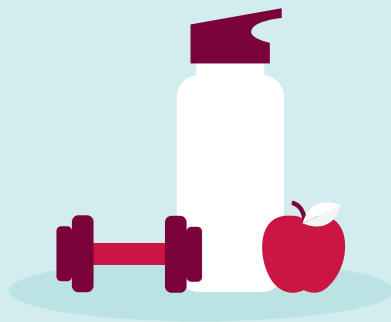
How to combat burnout?

Being a doctor is all about being responsive and readily available irrespective of the time and location. But hey, don't let these rigorous work schedules steal away your little moments of rest, joy, and leisure.

The most obvious and easiest way to recover from burnout is having some time off. Besides, you can also implement these powerful strategies for preventing severe burnout and getting back on track with more energy and enthusiasm:

At the personal level

- **Meditation:** Add meditation to your daily regime of self-care to avoid burnout and stress. This simple breathing technique not only makes you feel calm but also keeps you focused and relaxed. If meditating for longer time durations scares you, develop a 2-minute meditation routine and once you become comfortable, increase it to 5-15 minutes per session.
- **Mindfulness training:** Sometimes, we are so lost in completing our deadlines or outperforming our tasks that we forget to notice how we feel about ourselves. With mindfulness, you develop a connection with yourself and become 'mindful' of your activities, emotions, and thoughts. Also, this helps in prioritizing your energies, eliminating distractions, and accomplishing set tasks.
- **Physical exercise:** According to the latest research by Medscape, 48% of physicians used exercise as a tool to combat burnout. Exercise helps in releasing endorphins which are also known as feel-good hormones. Your exercise routine doesn't have to be 45-60 minutes long. Rather, it can be in the form of anything that creates movement in your body. So, hit the gym, do a few crunches, run, walk or do anything that awakens your body and reduces your stress levels.



At the organizational /practice level

- **Teamwork:** Many people perceive that physicians' roles are limited to treating patients and prescribing them medicines. However, that's not the case. Right after the patient makes an appointment, several administrative tasks such as entering orders, preparing Rx, and adding customer information to electronic health records come into play. By trying to do everything themselves, this translates into more work hours and fatigue and can ultimately become a source of burnout. As a solution, medical organizations and practices should look to delegate these time-consuming tasks directly to support staff so physicians can solely focus on what deserves their utmost attention-- their patients.

- **Professional Development:** Adequate time allocated for professional development is equally as important as treating patients. Improving your skills and maintaining your credentials are worthless if you don't know how you'll be using them in revolutionizing the healthcare industry. Find out what your goals are and how taking certain professional development programs will help you in achieving them.
- **Organizational Commitment:** Organizations should create effective strategies for safeguarding physicians' mental and physical well-being. Some of them are designing peer-support groups, offering mental wellness support while keeping their information confidential, encouraging open discussions with their leaders, and sharing what's stressing them out.

Conclusion

Physicians have worked selflessly to make their patients' lives better. And during these weird times, despite facing many challenges in their personal and professional lives, they have showcased resilience and strength. We understand that along with your heroism, you also have your own finances to take care of. Remember, we can lend a hand and offer the specialized care you deserve with our CIBC Full Service Physician Package. You can always reach out to one of our healthcare specialists for the right guidance, whether it's for your everyday finances, your practice or both. While you're busy giving it your all, don't forget we're here for you too.

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