



Happy Physicians, Healthy Patients

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An energized, engaged, and resilient physician workforce is essential to achieving national health goals. Yet burnout is more common among physicians than other U.S. workers, and that gap is increasing as the bureaucracy of modern medicine inflicts a mounting toll on physicians.

The high level of burnout among physicians is becoming a national health crisis. The AMA is urging Congress, hospitals, and health plans to recognize the coming crisis as an early warning sign of health system dysfunction. America's physicians are the canary in the coal mine.

Physicians who report high professional satisfaction have patients who are more satisfied with their care. Unfortunately, the work-induced syndrome of burnout and caregiver fatigue among physicians is a real and growing problem with potential to impact patients.

Studies show that burned out physicians are retiring early, reducing the time they devote to clinical work, or leaving medicine entirely. As a result, patients have longer waits to see their doctor or worse yet are losing their trusted physician forever.

The AMA heard loud and clear the concerns of physicians and has played a lead role in demonstrating that technology and administrative burdens contribute to burnout and warrant a vigorous response. A landmark 2013 AMA-RAND study found that physician burnout is driven primarily by barriers to providing high-quality care to patients in an efficient manner. The high volumes of clerical work, along with poorly designed technology, and the resultant time pressures are among the major drivers of alarming levels of physician burnout.

An AMA time-motion study quantifies how much time physicians spend conducting different tasks during the clinical day. The study found physician time is being taken away from patients due to the data entry demands of electronic medical records and other administrative desk work activities. During the office day, physicians spent 27 percent of their total time on direct clinical face time with patients and 49.2 percent of their time on EHR and deskwork activities. In other words, for every hour of direct clinical face time to patients, physicians spend nearly two hours of additional time on EHR and deskwork within the clinic day.

To all of us who practice medicine, it is clear that physicians spend too much time on administrative tasks that don't require the expertise of a MD or DO. The AMA push for meaningful change in the health system has a clear purpose: patients deserve the full and undivided attention of their physicians, populations deserve access to care, and society deserves more from its investment in medical education.

To help physicians succeed in their life's work of caring for patients, the AMA has made the prevention of burnout a core priority. Working with CEOs of health care delivery organizations, the AMA is leading a necessary change in medicine that embraces physician well-being as a critical factor in the long-term clinical and economic success of our nation's health care system.

The clear correlation between physician wellbeing and successful health system transformation led to an

explicit AMA action. At the 2016 AMA Annual Meeting, the House of Delegates adopted policy on the quadruple aim, adding “the goal of improving the work-life balance of physicians and other health care providers” to the existing [triple aim](#) of improving population health and patients’ care experiences while cutting per capital health care costs.

AMA policy goes further to also support programs to assist physicians in early identification and management of stress, focusing on the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of responding to stress in physicians' professional and personal lives.

The AMA is striving to help physicians cope with the real challenges of providing quality patient care in today's environment, arming them with relevant, cutting edge [tools](#), [information](#) and [resources](#), and, in so doing, rekindle a joy in medicine. The AMA's [STEPS Forward](#)<sup>TM</sup> collection of practice improvement strategies helps physicians make transformative changes to their practices. It offers modules on [preventing physician burnout in practice](#), [preventing resident and fellow burnout](#) and [improving physician resiliency](#).

Through its [ongoing work](#), the AMA is committed to help physicians and their practices thrive so they can continue to put patients first. By advancing initiatives that enhance efficiency, professional satisfaction, and the delivery of care, the AMA is striving to help physicians navigate and succeed in a continually evolving health care environment.