PHYSICIAN WELLNESS:
How do we achieve the 4th aim?

Steve Wengel, MD, Assistant vice chancellor for campus wellness for UNO and UNMC

OBJECTIVES

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1. Review signs and symptoms of physician burnout, stress, and depression
2. Discuss self care strategies that can reduce suffering and improve wellbeing

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

• None

Office of Wellness

Steve Wengel, MD
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Wellness
Geriatric psychiatrist

Located on the 6th Floor of Poynter Hall
402-552-6002

The IHI Triple Aim

Population Health

Experience of Care

Per Capita Cost

Health of a Population

Per Capita Cost

Experience of Care

Triple Aim

01

Graduate

02

Primary Care

03

Inpatient care

04

Ambulatory

05

Outpatient

06

Day Care
BURNOUT: DEFINITIONS

- **Emotional exhaustion**: feeling frustrated, tired of going to work, drained
- **Depersonalization/cynicism**: being less empathic with patients/others, detached from work, seeing patients as diagnoses/objects/sources of frustration
- **Low personal achievement**: experiencing work as unrewarding, “going through the motions”

GENERAL RISK FACTORS FOR BURNOUT/DISTRESS

- Sleep deprivation
- High level of work/life conflict
- High level of anger, loneliness, or anxiety
- Anxiety about competency/“Imposter Syndrome”
- Difficulty “unplugging” after work
- Regular use of alcohol and other drugs

DEPRESSION – DSM-5

- 5 or more of the following symptoms for ≥2 weeks:
  - Depressed mood most of the day
  - Diminished interest or pleasure
  - Significant weight loss or gain
  - Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
  - Psychomotor agitation or retardation
  - Fatigue of loss of energy
  - Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
  - Diminished ability to concentrate
  - Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation with or without a plan
PATIENT CARE AND PHYSICIAN WELL-BEING

- Physicians who care for themselves do a better job of caring for others
  - They are less likely to make errors
  - Have a higher patient satisfaction
- Habits of practice to promote well-being and resilience need to be cultivated across the continuum
- A healthy learning environment will lead to improved health care for all, physicians and patients

Gratitude journaling: Once a week, write down 3 new things that you are thankful or grateful for

Exercise

- Reduces anxiety
- Enhances mood
- Improves concentration
- Raises level of brain-derived neurotrophic protein (BDNF)

“Exercise is like taking a little bit of Prozac and Ritalin every day.”
Sleep Loss

- Increased secretion of proinflammatory cytokines
- Decreased circulating GH levels
- Reduced leptin, elevated ghrelin, and increased appetite

- Increased cravings for simple carbohydrates
- Impairment of glymphatic system

Practice Mindfulness

Mindful Breathing

- Take 6 seconds to breathe in
- Pause briefly
- Take 6 seconds to breathe out

Start with existing habits

#5: Meditate
Meditation benefits

• Improved sleep
• Reduced stress, anxiety
• Positive role in depression
• Improvement in immune system function
• Improved empathy
• Enhanced problem-solving ability
• Improved patient engagement with providers

Sara Lazar’s TED talk

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8rRzTtP7Tc

The “Relaxation Response”

• Term coined by Herbert Benson, M.D.
  – Cardiologist at Harvard
  – Lifelong research on role of stress on health, and positive effects of eliciting relaxation
  – Basic tenet: stress response and relaxation response are both hard wired, and mutually exclusive

Eliciting the Relaxation Response

• The following is the generic technique taught at the Benson-Henry Institute:
  • Pick a focus word, short phrase, or prayer that is firmly rooted in your belief system, such as “one,” “peace,” “The Lord is my shepherd,” “Hail Mary full of grace,” or “shalom.”
  • Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
  • Close your eyes.
  • Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, say your focus word, sound, phrase, or prayer silently to yourself as you exhale.
  • Assume a passive attitude. Don’t worry about how well you’re doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, “Oh well,” and gently return to your repetition.
  • Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. Do not set a timer.
  • Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Then open your eyes and sit for another minute before rising.
  • Practice the technique once or twice daily. Good times to do so are before breakfast and before dinner.
  • Don’t do the technique within 2 hours after a heavy meal.
What’s UNMC doing to improve the quality of life for our students, staff, and faculty?

- New positions created
  - Assoc. Vice Chancellor for Campus Wellness
  - Director of Wellness Education
  - COM Student Wellness Advocate
  - House Officer Assistance Program (HOAP)
- Wellbeing Coordinating Council
- Annual wellbeing symposium
- Annual wellbeing survey
- Stress Management courses, workshops, groups
- Enhanced access to mental health care
- Humanities enhancement projects (e.g., Nebraska Medical Orchestra)
- Research on impact of interventions

Public Health model

Medical students’ exposure to the humanities

- What type of humanities exposure counts?
  - Music, literature, visual arts, theater
  - Passive or active
- Positive correlations
  - Empathy
  - Wisdom
  - Tolerance of ambiguity
  - Spatial skills
  - Emotional appraisal
  - Openness
- Negative correlations
  - Cognitive weariness
  - Physical fatigue
  - Emotional exhaustion

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION