
ICU Volume 7 - Issue 1 - Spring 2007 - Editorial

Burnout in Care

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As critical care specialists, we are faced with strong physical and emotional challenges every day. The work in the intensive care unit (ICU) demands a constant high level of undivided concentration and a physical ability to stay alert for many hours. We are faced daily with numerous examples of human drama, from the critical condition or loss to the miraculous recovery of a patient. And as much as we may try to remain unaffected by this emotional side of our work, every person that comes for our care leaves a trace that is difficult to disregard. It is our job to be able to make the right life-saving decisions not later, not tomorrow, but immediately.

The result of this extremely stressful nature of the profession often leads to burnout of the staff – we become physically exhausted, emotionally weaker and more likely to make judgement mistakes or technical errors. Furthermore, burnout affects not only us as critical care professionals, but also it poses danger to our patients' safety and to our professional organizations' integrity. However, this is an issue that we can deal with, provided that we have and use the extensive knowledge, experience and desire to do so effectively. Burnout is a highly recognized problem in the critical care field and is also our main theme for this issue of **ICU Management**.

In our Cover Story section, Drs. Bion, Gupta and White provide an overview of foremost literature on the syndrome, addressing not only the nature and causes of the problem in general, but also its specific impact on staff and patients in the critical care environment, and the currently available methods for its amelioration. Drs. Dorman and Pauline further explore the topic in their article entitled "Burnout Syndrome in the ICU" by taking a closer look at the elements of the syndrome and the different risk factors that need to be considered for its prevention. Both articles give emphasis to the methods of addressing the issue by positive management of the working environment. On a slightly different note, Dr. Pepe's article tackles the issue of short-term burnout of ICU staff during major disaster situations, a topic that has so far received less overall attention.

With these instructive articles **ICU Management** joins the community's efforts for prevention and management of burnout in the critical care profession. We hope that you will find this issue beneficial in your personal battle against burnout and for the life of your patients.

Published on : Thu, 15 Aug 2013