

Physician Burnout on the Rise in the U.S.



Physician burnout is escalating in the U.S. Authors of a recent study found that towards the end of the second year of the pandemic, more physicians experienced increased levels of emotional exhaustion and higher depersonalisation scores compared to previous years.

This study, which involved 1373 physicians surveyed over three different periods, aimed to investigate the prevalence of burnout among physicians within a large multispecialty group over a span of five years.

This survey was carried out in 2017, 2019, and 2021, involving physician faculty members of the Massachusetts General Physicians Organization (MGPO). The participants included individuals from various clinical specialties and career stages. The survey questionnaire encompassed four key domains: career and compensation satisfaction, well-being, administrative workload, and leadership and diversity.

The study revealed higher rates of burnout among female physicians when compared to their male counterparts, primary care physicians compared with other specialists, and physicians with 10 years of experience or less compared to more experienced physicians.

The results showed that the odds of burnout doubled from 2019 to 2021; some groups had higher burnout rates than others. For example, female physicians, primary care physicians and those with 10 years of experience and less reported higher levels of burnout than others.

However, most physicians stayed in the same state of burnout throughout the three survey periods. More than 60% did not change their burnout score over the three surveys, whilst 30% revealed an increase in their already high scores.

For the physicians who had been in practice for 11-20 years, their rate of burnout declined slightly from 44% in 2017 to 42% in 2019, but increased up to 50% in 2021.

When examining specific burnout measures, both the exhaustion score and cynicism score increased by 20% for all physicians from 2019 to 2021. Primary care physicians had a 25.0% higher exhaustion score and 20.0% higher cynicism score than physicians in internal medicine.

Overall, the study demonstrated an association between physician burnout and personal and professional factors.

As the authors summarised, “Those with less burnout often had more years of experience”.

“These physicians also spent less time on administrative tasks, pointing to increased job satisfaction with less bureaucracy”.

Source: [JAMA](#)

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