

Commitment Statement on Physician Well-Being

Rosemary Hanrahan MD, MPH, ACC (December 2017)

Beyond Words Wellness Resources (BWWR) is committed to increasing awareness of clinician burnout and compassion fatigue, identifying causes, and exploring evidence-based, best practices interventions to remediate and prevent burnout.

Physician and other healthcare professional burnout is now recognized as a significant concern in the healthcare sector, affecting over half of US physicians. Increasing complexity of medicine, rapidly changing technology, and common internal traits among physicians, such as perfectionism, delayed gratification and guilt, are contributing factors. Although individual variations exist, no age, sex or specialty is immune. The consequences for the system include: increased medical error rate and turnover, lower patient and clinician satisfaction, negative patient outcomes and higher costs for organizations and the greater healthcare system.

Professional coaching, long utilized in the business world, has recently received limited attention in the healthcare sector. As stated in the International Coach Federation Code of Ethics, 2017, coaching involves “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” Coaching increases self-awareness, draws on individuals strengths and values and offers a results-oriented and stigma-free process to address physician burnout.

Although studies are limited, the practice of self-compassion appears to be of special benefit to those in the healthcare sector. Self-compassion training includes mindful awareness, connection to common humanity and self-kindness. Neuroscience and subjective reports supporting self-compassion as an intervention to remediate and prevent burnout in healthcare are extremely encouraging. By promoting well-being and improving personal resiliency, healthcare professionals are also able to positively impact patients and their work place practice environment.

BWWR will act in the following areas:

- Provide professional coaching to individual physicians, other healthcare professionals and healthcare teams, utilizing recent evidence-based studies by the American Medical Association, the National Academy of Medicine, the Harvard Medical School Institute of Coaching and the Greater Good Science Center at Berkley to help clients develop personal and professional strategies to remain engaged, passionate and productive in their chosen profession. These strategies include self-compassion practice and values and strengths-based coaching.
- Engaging in collaborative partnerships with experts and thought leaders in the coaching community whose mission is to prevent and remediate physician burnout in designing and following best practice interventions to prevent and alleviate burnout and its negative impact on patients and healthcare providers.
- Active participation in the greater multidisciplinary healthcare community by sharing experiences, results and challenges and partnering to develop interventions that address organizational and larger system factors that contribute to physician and healthcare professional burnout.

Beyond Words Wellness Resources was founded by Rosemary Hanrahan MD, MPH, ACC, a practicing physician in the Western Pennsylvania region. As a certified professional coach, author, nonprofit advocate, and physician with a Master of Public Health, Rosemary, brings her coaching to professionals and organizations in the healthcare and the nonprofit sectors. With over 25 years experience in medicine and 17 years experience working and volunteering with nonprofit organizations, Rosemary believes that individuals and organizations who care for others provide an invaluable service to society, but are also at risk for compassion fatigue and professional burnout.