

SUNY Upstate Medical University Statement of Commitment to Provider Well-Being and Resilience

Physician burnout is a serious individual concern and a threat to our healthcare system. Burnout has been linked to depression, staff turnover, decreased productivity and increased error. Recently, the CEOs of 10 healthcare organizations wrote that “the high level of burnout among physicians should be considered an early warning sign of dysfunction in our health care system.” While they noted “Dissatisfaction is driven by]...administrative and regulatory concerns, limitations of current technology...,” and other system-wide variables, they also recommended individual-level interventions, e.g. “Regularly assessing and reporting out on the well-being of the physician workforce.” Burnout is also a concern for students, residents, nurses and others. And, effects can be synergistic, i.e., a burned out physician will serve as a negative role model/mentor for learners.

In Jan., 2017, leadership organized a Provider Well-Being Task Force. Our goals are to develop effective individual and institutional interventions to prevent provider burnout (and enhance well-being), and identify those at risk for burnout to provide assistance. Upstate has several key resources in place.

1. “New York State Balance”- a free, confidential resource/referral service, includes information on budgeting, finding child care, elder care, retirement planning, parenting, college preparation, home repair, and health/wellness, plus articles and interactive tools. www.worklife.ny.gov
2. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)- a free, confidential, brief counseling/referral program for employees experiencing mental health difficulties or stressful circumstances.
3. “Pathway to Wellness Program”- A vibrant program, offers wellness-related opportunities, e.g., Quit smoking café, Monday Mile Walks, Tranquility Tuesday (guided meditation), and wellness-focused challenges.
4. “Schwarz Center Rounds”- A multidisciplinary forum at which caregivers discuss social and emotional issues that arise in patient care, to learn from, and support, each other.

The Provider Well-Being Task Force proposed two new initiatives:

1. Well-Being Index- Partnering with Med+Ed Web Solutions (business arm of the Mayo Clinic for this project) to offer access to The Well-Being Index (WBI) for employees. The WBI is a 9-item self-assessment questionnaire, completed anonymously online, which provides the employee scores on burnout-related measures to be compared to peers. Then, the employee is provided with a comprehensive range of resources (i.e., videos, literature, self-help activities, publications) to help in developing a plan for change. De-identified data are available to leadership to assess overall employee well-being and potentially the effects of interventions.
2. Clinical Collaboration Center (“C³” or “The Cube”)- To find fulfillment in work we must feel that we are part of a community and experience a sense of connection. Space be allocated in which providers may gather informally to privately discuss patient challenges, research collaborations and educational programming, called the Clinical Collaboration Center (The Cube). We will then develop a plan for its use to build community and sense of purpose.

Upstate employees recently completed the “One University Survey” to assess work-life satisfaction. We will identify 3 areas to address based on these data that focus on system-wide environment change.

There are many and varied changes we can make to enhance provider well-being. We are committed to working creatively and collaboratively to implement innovative approaches.