

Promoting Provider Wellness: Impact of a Primary Care Fellowship on Measures of Burnout

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INTRODUCTION

Burnout and reduced career satisfaction can occur when an overwhelmed primary care system results in clinicians unable to provide the level of care that their values and medical training insist upon. The aim of this study was to examine the impact of a primary care fellowship on well-being characteristics reflective of the reduction in provider burnout and improvement in "joy in practice."

METHODS

Over three years, 15 primary care fellows (9 physicians and 6 physician assistants) participated in a one-year, part-time fellowship training program. Skills within six content areas (see Figure 1) were learned through readings, assignments, lectures, and collaborative discussions amongst fellows, faculty, and motivational community leaders. Fellows completed a 45-question self-assessment and three well-being inventories prior and post training, with quarterly feedback forms and biannual focus groups centered around feedback. Pre- and post- test responses were analyzed for statistically significant change and focus group transcripts were analyzed for prevailing themes.

RESULTS

Cumulative results from year one and two (6 physicians and 3 physician assistants) demonstrated improvement in the wellness and burnout self-assessment indicators, specifically showing positive changes in frequency of signs/symptoms of burnout, work satisfaction/engagement, level of stress. Improvement in knowledge of resources for personal and organizational wellness was statistically significant. Year three data collection is currently in progress. Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts suggest that having a united team also appeared to foster a beneficial camaraderie impacting wellness.

DISCUSSION

The medical, occupational, and societal impacts of stress and high-performance expectations highlight the need for cultivating provider self-care to reduce physician and physician assistant burnout. A primary care fellowship composed of asynchronous projects mixed with engaged meetings (in-person and zoom) between fellows, faculty, and local community leaders was useful in fostering provider wellness and reducing burnout related to serving as a 21st century provider in US medicine. By improving wellness of physicians and physician assistants, the results of primary care medicine can be strengthened. A fellowship such as this one provides the education, tools, and support to foster improved "joy in practice," which may be a first step in reducing burnout.

Figure 1: Six curricular content areas



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Self-Study

- Completion of 3 Wellness Inventories: 1. Maslach Burnout Inventory 2. Perceived Stress Scale 3. Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
- Viewing of AMA Professional Well-being modules: 1. Creating the Organizational Foundation for Joy in Medicine 2. Appreciative Inquiry
- Readings from *Finding a Balance in Medical Life* (Lipsenthal)
- Identifying boundaries: Assessing work and personal life overlap
- Selection and experience with wellness app of fellow's choice

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Community Group Discussions

- Personal Wellness Resources: Strategies to mitigate sources of burnout
- Organizational Wellness: Identifying and addressing sources of burnout within practice teams, health systems, and organizations



www.primarycarechampions.com

Results from Selected Self-Assessments Survey Items

1. How important is provider wellness or well-being to your continued development as a primary care provider?

n=9	PRE N (%)	POST N (%)
1= Not at all	0	0
2= Slightly	0	0
3= Moderately	0	0
4= Quite	3/9 (33%)	1/9 (11%)
5= Extremely	6/9 (67%)	8/9 (89%)
Overall Mean Score	4.67	4.89

2. How often do you assess your wellbeing in the following ways?:

Signs/Symptoms of Burnout		
	PRE N (%)	POST N (%)
1= Almost never	2/9 (22%)	0
2= Once in awhile	2/9 (22%)	0
3= Sometimes	5/9 (56%)	3/9 (33%)
4= Often	0	5/9 (56%)
5= Almost always	0	1/9 (11%)
Overall Mean Score	2.33	3.78

Work Satisfaction/ Engagement		
	PRE N (%)	POST N (%)
1= Almost never	1/9 (11%)	0
2= Once in awhile	0	0
3= Sometimes	3/9 (33%)	2/9 (22%)
4= Often	3/9 (33%)	6/9 (67%)
5= Almost always	2/9 (22%)	1/9 (11%)
Overall Mean Score	3.56	3.89

Level of stress		
	PRE N (%)	POST N (%)
1= Almost never	1/9 (11%)	0
2= Once in awhile	0	0
3= Sometimes	5/9 (56%)	2/9 (22%)
4= Often	2/9 (22%)	5/9 (56%)
5= Almost always	1/9 (11%)	2/9 (22%)
Overall Mean Score	3.22	4

3. How knowledgeable are you about resources to improve your personal wellness?*

	PRE N (%)	POST N (%)
1= Not at all	2/9 (22%)	0
2= Slightly	4/9 (44%)	0
3= Moderately	1/9 (11%)	4/9 (44%)
4= Quite	2/9 (22%)	4/9 (44%)
5= Extremely	0	1/9 (11%)
Overall Mean Score	2.33	3.67

**Exact Sig (2-tailed) p=0.008

4. How knowledgeable are you about resources to improve the wellness of your organization (such as your clinical practice site)?**

	PRE N (%)	POST N (%)
1= Not at all	4/9 (44%)	0
2= Slightly	5/9 (56%)	2/9 (22%)
3= Moderately	0	6/9 (67%)
4= Quite	0	1/9 (11%)
5= Extremely	0	0
Overall Mean Score	1.56	2.89

**Exact Sig (2-tailed) p=0.008

"Just getting to see each other and share experiences of difficult patient encounters- that was actually **really good for my wellness**... Sometimes you don't feel like you have a whole network of people."

-Fellow, cohort 2