

PERCEPTION OF BURNOUT AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC HOSPITALISTS DURING COVID-19

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BACKGROUND

- Studies document the rate of burnout to be twice that of the general working population of the US.
- The root cause varies between specialties, yet an overarching theme is work-related stress.
- Another major contributor is organizational factors such as negative leadership and limited opportunities for advancement.
- To make matters worse, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated physician burnout.

STUDY AIMS

- Although there have been global studies of physician burnout during COVID-19, few studies highlight the impact of COVID-19 on physician burnout in the US. Our study contributes to this gap.

METHODS

- Academic Hospitalists at Froedtert Hospital & the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) were recruited to participate in a series of qualitative, semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
- Focus group participants included 20 physicians from Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin divided up into 5 groups of 4.
- Questions focused on contributors to burnout, the influence of COVID-19 on wellness/burnout, and perceptions of hospitalists during COVID-19.
- To find reoccurring themes, sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed with *Taguette*, a free and open-source qualitative data tool

KEY THEMES

Exhaustion

"This has really wiped me out...I have nothing left"

"There are requests every day for extra coverage so there's this feeling of always being understaffed"

Lack of Control

"Burnout is all about how much control you have and your input in the sudden decision-making process"

"There are things we are required to do that we don't really have control over"

Bureaucratic Hurdles

"Less time is spent with patient care and more time is spent writing the notes for the patient"

COVID-19 SPECIFIC THEMES

Work Life Balance

"It has been difficult juggling clinical work, family, and schools being virtual for my children...my job was doubled both at home and at work."

Emotional Stress

"It was stressful to think about getting the infection and taking it back home to my family"

"The stress of trying to help the entire group when colleagues become ill has been challenging and has affected us psychologically."

Patient Skepticism

"Whenever I see a Covid patient who refuses to be vaccinated despite so much information out there, I lose empathy"

DISCUSSION

- A big factor of work stress is working excessive hours and an inefficient work environment
- Increased control over the workplace can lower levels of burnout
- COVID created pressure on faculty to cover for ill colleague's shifts

CONCLUSION

- The COVID-19 pandemic increased physician burnout while maintaining traditional views of physician burnout and creating unique perceptions of physician burnout.

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