

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

Mohamed T. Abdelrahim, MA; Parsia Vazirnia, BS; Marie Luebke, MHS; Komal Khoja, BA; Brian Quinn, MD; Muhammad Hammad, MD; Sanjay Bhandari, MD; Pinky Jha, MD  
Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI

## 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.

## REFERENCES

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