The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Test of System-Level Physician Wellness

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COVID CORNER
Wednesday, July 15th, 7-9pm

Moderators

Kelly Burak
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Denise Campbell-Scherer
• Grants or Clinical Trials: Obesity Canada via Novo Nordisk - unrestricted educational grant to support physicians and teams with training in obesity prevention and management. NOVAD (University Hospitals Foundation, Novo Nordisk, Alberta Government) – grant awarded by private/public consortium in obesity prevention and management.
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• The program was developed and planned to achieve scientific integrity, objectivity and balance
• This program has received educational grants from the
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  • Alberta Health Services
  • Calgary Health Trust

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- **Dr. Jane Lemaire**: Physician Lead Well Doc Alberta; Clinical Professor UofC; Member of AMA PFSP Advisory Committee; funding related to physician wellness program received from CPSA, AMA, UofC; honoraria for speaking engagements related to physician wellness

- **Alicia Polachek**: Co-Lead and Program Manager, Well Doc Alberta; Research Assistant Professor UofC

- **Dr. Shannon Ruzycki**: Assistant Clinical Professor UofC; funding from OHMES Medical Education Grant, Department of Medicine Health Analytics Working Grant
Webinar Development Attribution

• Jane Lemaire (Content expert and webinar development)
• Alicia Polachek (Content expert and webinar development)
• Shannon Ruzycki (Content expert and webinar development)
• Kelly Burak (Webinar concept development)
• Andrea Davila Cervantes (Webinar concept development)
• Physician respondents to surveys and Invite to Input (Contributions of opinions and perspectives)
• AMA, PFSP, ZMSA, and many other leaders and organizations (Shared wisdom, summaries of important data bases and experiences)

Session Overview

• This session focuses on a discussion about how the pandemic tested physician wellness at the system level
• There will be quiet moments for self-reflection and opportunities to share
  • Menti.com code 51 03 53
• Alicia Polachek will summarize your shared responses
• There is no formal Q and A
Learning Objectives

After this session, participants will be able to:

• Describe how the existing system-level approach to physician wellness supported physicians during the pandemic
• Identify gaps in the system-level physician wellness supports during the pandemic
• Identify strategies for addressing gaps in physician wellness support, anticipating future crises

Who’s here tonight?

Menti.com      code 51 03 53

A few basic questions about who has joined us, so we can understand our audience and stratify some of the Mentimeter responses at the end of the session
Physician Wellness

• Physicians are at risk of
  • Burnout
  • Death by suicide
  • Undiagnosed and/or untreated mental illness
• Physicians who are unwell
  • Cannot contribute fully to the pandemic response
  • May perform sub-optimally
• Physician wellness is a shared responsibility
  • Individual
  • Culture of Medicine /Profession
  • Healthcare system

Pandemic and Threats to Physical Safety

• Biohazards
• Logistic supports
• Workload and schedule
Pandemic and Threats to Psychological Safety

- Threats generate psychological stress
- Stress results in poor mental health outcomes
  - Increased anxiety
  - Exacerbation of chronic mental illness
  - New onset mental illness
  - Burnout


Pandemic Through the Lens of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Where to Begin? Mental Health and Psychological Support

- Informal peer support from colleagues
- Family physician, formal peer support teams
- Alberta Medical Association Physician and Family Support Program, University Employee Assistance Programs, UME and PGME psychological support services for learners
- Informal peer support from colleagues
- Physical safety considerations


Solid Foundation – Anticipating Needs

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Emotional Support
Informational Support
Instrumental Support

Anxiety

Psychological Stress
Physiological Stress

Reflection #1
Menti.com code 51 03 53

What emotional, informational, and/or instrumental supports did you receive during the pandemic?

e.g. Instrumental support – my mother helped with child care
Pandemic and Sources of Anxiety

- PPE
- Logistics
- Support if I fall ill
- Information
- Infection
- Childcare
- Redeployment
- Access to testing

Poll #1: Sources of Anxiety
Menti.com code 51 03 53

Poll #1a: Other Sources of Anxiety
Menti.com code 51 03 53
(free text limited to 25 characters)
Moral Injury as a Source of Trauma

- Common in healthcare when exposed to trauma you feel unprepared for
- Expected when providing care deemed suboptimal due to limited resources
  - Shame, guilt, or disgust with oneself
  - I am a terrible person


Poll #2: Moral Distress
Menti.com  code 51 03 53
Moral Distress Leads to Moral Injury

- Physicians are at risk
- Avoidance is a symptom of trauma
- Leaders should prepare their workforce
- Peer support should incorporate training
- Formal psychological support may be needed

Results: Reflection #1

What emotional, informational, and/or instrumental supports did you receive during the pandemic?
Leadership and Chaotic Systems


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Pandemic and Leadership

Effective leadership includes:
• Visibility
• Compassion
• Communication
• Advocacy
• Ensuring support
• Maintaining humor
• Keeping a sense of purpose


Pandemic and Informal Leadership
Challenges of Working During the Pandemic

- Rural Primary Care
- Educators
- Administrators
- Equity
- Inpatients
- Learners
- Leaders
- Diversity
- Outpatients
- Researchers
- Inclusion

Break

We will resume in 5 minutes
System-Level Emotional Supports

- Informal and formal peer support
- Mindfulness training and practice
- Virtual meeting places
- Formal psychological supports

System-Level Informational Supports

- Formal training sessions and webinars
- Communications from leadership
- Other educational resources to support wellness and highlight resources
- Avenues to voice concerns or provide feedback

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System-Level Instrumental Supports

Organizational changes

Access to physical resources/spaces

Access to new support resources

Physical supplies

Reflection #2

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What physician wellness supports did you find most helpful during the pandemic?
Reflection #3
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What gaps in system-level support for physician wellness did you observe during the pandemic?

Recovery?

Life is getting better
Psychological Response Phases

- **Preparation Phase**
  - Anticipatory anxiety

- **Active Phase**
  - Heroics and surge to solution
  - Disillusionment and exhaustion

- **Recovery Phase**
  - Recovery and long-term psychological impacts

Recovery Phase

- Experiences of healthcare workers
  - Depression (50%)
  - Anxiety (44%)
  - Insomnia (34%)
  - Distress (71%)
  - Moral injury
  - Burnout

- Leaders and physicians must recognize the emotional cost and the need for restoration


Recovery From...

Recovery Phase – What We May Experience

- Reflect on experiences
- Cope
- Experience signs of trauma
- Resentment towards individuals and organizations
- Changed in a positive way
- Risk of chronic psychological difficulties

Highfield et al. The British Psychological Society – The psychological needs of healthcare staff as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic
Recovery Phase – After Care

• Share experiences/narratives
• Celebrate achievements
• Ongoing psychological support for anxiety, mental illness, burnout
• View experiences through lens of equity, diversity and inclusion

Results: Reflection #2

What physician wellness supports did you find most helpful during the pandemic?
Gaps

Gaps – Gender Equity

Sheryl Sandberg: The coronavirus pandemic is creating a 'double double shift' for women. Employers must help

The decline of women's research production during the coronavirus pandemic
Preprints analysis suggests a disproportionate impact on early career researchers.

19 May 2020

World
Women have been on front lines of Italy's war on coronavirus but shut out from task force leading response
Gaps – Child Care

Gaps – Support for Anti-Racism
Gaps – Income Stabilization

COVID-19 pandemic exposes flaws in doctor billing contract

Gaps – Balancing Surge Preparation and Provision of Ongoing Care for Patients

Editor's Note: This article was published on April 17, 2020, at NEJM.org.

The Untold Toll — The Pandemic’s Effects on Patients without Covid-19
Lisa Rosenbaum, M.D.

Coronavirus: Plea for public to get medical care when they need it
By Philip Hardy
Health reporter
Gaps – Support for Primary/Community/Rural

Gaps – Managing Negative Effects on Education
Results: Reflection #3

What gaps in system-level support for physician wellness did you observe during the pandemic?

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Strategies for Moving Forward and Addressing Gaps

- Acknowledge the presence of pre-existing stressors
- Build on the foundations
- Apply learnings - what works, what are gaps
- Harness momentum
  - Embed pandemic supports long-term
  - Strengthen relationships, communication
  - Share and standardize resources

Strategies for Moving Forward and Addressing Gaps

- Formalize wellness groups and wellness officer positions
- Ensure diverse representation within leadership and wellness groups
- Ensure wellness represented in formal crisis planning
Closing Reflections

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