Recognizing and Addressing Physician Burnout

Justin Smith, MD (Abilene)
Carl Tapia, MD (Houston)

We have nothing to disclose
Objectives

1. Discuss the problem of burnout among physicians
2. Distinguish the symptoms of burnout
3. Develop a personal action plan to address burnout
THE PROBLEM OF BURNOUT
What is burnout?

• Loss of enthusiasm for work
• Feelings of cynicism
• Low sense of personal accomplishment

Scope of the issue

- 40% of physicians
- 35% of pediatricians (rank = 20)
- Maladjustment or adjustment to maladapted health care system?
  - Regulation
  - Paperwork
  - Insurance companies
  - Perceived undervalue


Is burnout serious?

Less effective clinicians

• Top rated stressors: bureaucratic tasks, too many hours at work

• More prone to errors


Is burnout serious?

Less effective personal lives

• Gender gap: 61% women vs 32% men
• Less likely to report happy at home
• More likely to report poor health
• More likely to report unmanageable debt
• Vicious cycle: less likely to take vacation, less likely to exercise

Is burnout serious?

Threat to profession

• Peaks at age 46-55
• Less likely to volunteer
• More likely to leave the profession


THE SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT
Stress vs burnout

• Lack of interest
• Chronic fatigue
• Unprofessional behaviors (anger, irritation)

Caregiver Strain Questionnaire

- How worried are you about the future?
- How tired or strained do you feel?
- How sad or unhappy do you feel?
- How often is your personal time interrupted?
- How often are your family routines interrupted?
- How off do you neglect duties?
- How guilty do you feel about your work problems?
- How disruptive is work in your family relationships?
- How often do your family members do without?
- How worried are you about financial strain for your family?

1 = none
5 = a lot

McCabe K, et al. Ment Health Serv Res. 2003;5:137-147
Unpublished data, C Tapia, 2013
AN ACTION PLAN
Solutions to burnout

• Follow your own advice
  – Eat a healthy diet
  – Exercise and rest
  – Leverage your hobbies (family, etc)
  – Develop nurturing relationships
  – Find a mentor


Solutions to burnout

• Eliminate negative factors
  – Avoid those who are negative
  – Take vacation!
  – Release control: “I am responsible” to “We are responsible”


Solutions to burnout

• Rediscover the joy of medicine
  – Reflect on what you do well
  – Recognize your role as healer
  – Value the challenges
  – Just talk with patients

“The good physician knows the disease the patient has. The great physician knows the patient who has the disease.”

-- Sir William Osler


Solutions to burnout

• Take control of your practice
  – Recognize your successes!
  – Advocate for payment for value
  – Advocate for less hassle factors
  – Reorganize time for complex patients


8 Transforming Principles

1. Let patients tell their stories
2. Recognize the expertise of patients
3. Respect the experience of illness
4. Give information in patient-centric manner

8 Transforming Principles

5. Acknowledge emotional content
6. Reciprocity and negotiation
7. Equalize power
8. Develop the doctor-patient relationship

FCC improves physician satisfaction

- Observation of 127 physicians
- Videotaped observations
- Patient and physician data
- Consistent patterns of communication
  - Tend to stick to one style
  - No differences in length of visits
  - 60% focused on biomedical visit types
  - No difference in visit types

FCC improves physician satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Patient</th>
<th>Physician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical</td>
<td>High medical info</td>
<td>14x medical info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lots of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biopsychosocial</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>More med info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fewer questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial</td>
<td>2x social</td>
<td>Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fewest questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumerist</td>
<td>Most questions</td>
<td>More med info</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FCC improves physician satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Patient</th>
<th>Physician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical</td>
<td>High medical info</td>
<td>14x medical info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lots of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biopsychosocial</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>More med info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fewer questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial</td>
<td>2x social</td>
<td>Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fewest questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumerist</td>
<td>Most questions</td>
<td>More med info</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FCC improves physician satisfaction

- Psychosocial visits: physicians rated patients with better physical health
- Biopsychosocial / Consumerist visits: patients rated themselves with better health
- Biomedical had lowest physician satisfaction and least likely to report accomplished goals of the visit

Action plan

• Rate your own level of burnout
• Commit to one action to decrease burnout
• Think about barriers to your action
• If you need to, identify someone to mentor
## Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specific</td>
<td>measurable</td>
<td>attainable</td>
<td>realistic</td>
<td>time frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clearly define desired outcome</td>
<td>define goals quantitatively</td>
<td>create goals that motivate</td>
<td>set challenging but realistic goals</td>
<td>set deadlines for accomplishments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Long-Term

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

### Short-Term

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

---

[Image of a table with S.M.A.R.T. goal criteria and blank spaces for long-term and short-term goals with placeholders for 1 to 4.]