

# Effect of a Professional Coaching Intervention on the Well-being and Distress of Physicians

## A Pilot Randomized Clinical Trial

Liselotte N. Dyrbye, Tait D. Shanafelt, Priscilla R. Gill, EdD, Daniel V. Satele; Colin P. West

Reference: <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2019.2425>

This randomized study from within the Mayo Clinic organization sought to examine if professional coaching at the individual level resulted in measurable reduction in burnout and improvement in a range of markers of resilience and workplace satisfaction. It was carefully stratified for age, experience, geography, workload and specialist vs generalist status. With 88 participants, it is one of the largest studies of this type. Physicians in the intervention group received a modest 3.5 hours of coaching over 5 months. This relatively small intervention resulted in significant improvements in emotional exhaustion, overall burnout score, Quality of Life score and resilience score in the intervention vs control group. Approximately one third of the coaching themes reported from these sessions were about modifying or improving the work environment and productivity, rather than on personal response to stress.

**Comment:** This study is distinguished from many small studies in this area by its rigor in design, use of multiple measures and the number of participants. It does also demonstrate the challenge of engaging physicians in coaching; the 88 participants were drawn from a potential pool of over 700. That a significant number of physicians chose to use these sessions to explore enhancing their influence on system factors stresses the importance of this dimension of burnout mitigation.

## 10 Bold Steps to Prevent Burnout in General Internal Medicine

Mark Linzer, Rachel Levine, David Meltzer, Sara Poplau, Carole Warde, and Colin P. West  
10.10

Reference: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-013-2597-8>

This is an opinion piece rather than a study but, even though it is now relatively “old” as a 2014 paper it warrants mention as a well constructed call to action on multiple fronts to deal with burnout. The authors propose 10 steps to mitigate physician burnout in general medicine, under 4 domains, Institutional Metrics, Work Conditions, Career Development and Self Care. Nine of the 10 reflect actions reasonably considered under the system rather than personal umbrella, even if they devolve to individual actions, such as participation in system sponsored mindfulness programs. The essay stresses the importance of reasonable work conditions and the need for high performing individuals to be able to craft a career path that aligns with their passions.

# An Organizational Improvement Model for Preventing Burnout of Healthcare Employees

Rajaram Govindarajan

Reference: <https://doi.org/10.4236/jhrss.2018.64044>

This opinion piece from Spain comes from a little outside of the traditional areas in which this discussion occurs but it proposes an interesting model of drivers of chronic stress that causes burnout that is informative as to where there are opportunities to apply different types of coaching. The 4 areas of opportunity to intervene they identify are:

- Detection and resolution of organizational issues which requires the ability clearly define and work within roles , understand and prevent systemic conflict.
- Detection and resolution of communication issues, requiring the ability to develop good communication channels and use them skilfully
- Detection and resolution of resource issues, requiring the ability to manage under different circumstances and advocate successfully to have team needs met
- Detection and elimination of knowledge/skill shortcomings, requiring skill in giving feedback and designing positive interventions in others, and self knowledge and motivation to improve in self.

## Executive Leadership and Physician Well-being: Nine Organizational Strategies to Promote Engagement and Reduce Burnout

Tait D. Shanafelt, and John H. Noseworthy

Reference: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2016.10.004>

This opinion piece co-authored by the Director of the Program on Physician Well being and the President and CEO of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN works from the assumption that burnout arises from a combination of personal and systemic factors and has personal and systemic costs that cannot be artificially separated from each other. In some ways complementary to the aforementioned paper, they generate a table identifying personal and multiple levels of system factors that come into play for all the commonly accepted drivers of burnout. Their strategies are:

1. Acknowledge and Assess the problem
2. Harness the Power of Leadership
3. Develop and implement targeted interventions
4. Cultivate community at work
5. Use rewards and incentive wisely
6. Align Values and Strengthen Culture
7. Promote Flexibility and Work Life Integration
8. Provide Resources to Promote Resilience and Self Care
9. Facilitate and Find Organizational Science>

While numbers 7 and 8 would be strongly in the wheel house of focused life and wellness coaches, the rest of the recommendations and daily grist to any organizational or leadership coach.