Attention Medical Students You Are Not Alone

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THE PREVALENCE OF BURNOUT AND ASSOCIATED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS TODAY IS STAGGERING. ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN MEDICAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION, BY THE TIME STUDENTS REACH RESIDENCY:

- 60% MEET THE CRITERIA FOR BURNOUT
- 50% SCREEN POSITIVE FOR DEPRESSION
- 12% HAVE PROBABLE MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER
- 9% ADMIT TO SUICIDAL IDEATIONS

FURTHER, DESPITE THE ENORMOUS SUCCESS THESE STUDENTS HAVE ATTAINED, THE AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION REPORTS THAT MEDICAL STUDENTS ARE 3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT SUICIDE COMPARED TO THEIR AGED-MATCHED PEERS.

WHAT CAUSES BURNOUT?

- The abundance of stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The need for physical health.
- The need for mental health.

BURNOUT DURING THE PANDEMIC

- 60% OF SURVEYED STUDENTS REPORTED STRESS DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (1).
- 31% OF STUDENTS SCREENED POSITIVE FOR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION, RESPECTIVELY (2).
- 40% OF STUDENTS THINK COVID-19 INTERUPTIONS AND CHANGES TO THEIR EDUCATION WILL HAVE AT LEAST A MODERATELY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THEIR ABILITY TO PRACTICE MEDICINE AS THEY LAUNCH THEIR CAREERS (3).

Further, despite the enormous success these students have attained, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports that medical students are 3 times more likely to commit suicide compared to their aged-matched peers.

“Many distressed students do not seek help because of stigma, personality traits, and other factors, which can limit the benefits of student support services.”

Chantal Brasseau, M.D. The Surest Way to Prevent Burnout in Medical School and Beyond. Academic Medicine, 2010.


HOW TO MANAGE BURNOUT

- Manage physical health. Medical students can have an active discussion with their own medical providers about diet, meditation, and exercise plans.
- Maintain connectedness with peers: Talk with your fellow students and build a support network. Be open about your physical/mental exhaustion or if you are experiencing burnout, as it is important to acknowledge the problem.
- Learn about your support systems: Many medical schools have developed programs that focus on ensuring students are taking care of themselves and are learning how to deal with the stress and pressure of becoming a physician.

Research for this infographic was performed at Wayne State University School of Medicine by Tala Al-Saghir, Deanna Harajli, Anneliese Rademacher, Abdullah Sayhouni, Matthew Trendowski, and Thomas Vander Woode.