

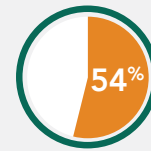
Healing the Healers: Physician Wellness

GENERAL OVERVIEW

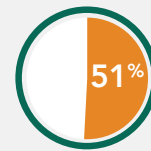
Physicians treat patients in increasingly complex, often challenging situations. Unpredictable changes to policy and regulation, evolving technology, and an ever-growing volume of clinical literature are all factors that contribute to pressure, stress, and burnout. Kaiser Permanente’s integrated health care delivery system enables physicians to work in streamlined settings that emphasize care, not paperwork. Additionally, the Permanente Medical Groups (PMGs) maintain a dedicated focus on ensuring physician wellness and resilience.

As national data indicate that those in medical fields face higher rates of burnout each year, it is imperative that physician groups and health care organizations foster an environment of physician wellness and resilience. Stressed physicians have overall lower productivity, and physician burnout can contribute to high turnover rates, early retirement, medical errors, and malpractice risk. The PMGs’ commitment to solving physician burnout is reflected in their commitment to the Quadruple Aim: better outcomes, enhanced patient experience, lower costs, and improved physician wellness. These physician-led groups promote a mission-driven culture rooted in purpose, collaboration, and pride. The PMGs believe that physicians who are healthy in body, mind, and spirit are better equipped to help their patients achieve similar outcomes.

QUICK FACTS



Percent of physicians experiencing at least one symptom of burnout in 2014, up from 46 percent in 2011, according to Mayo Clinic survey.



Burnout rate among physicians in the 2017 Medscape Physician Lifestyle Survey. (Up from 39.8 percent in 2013).



How Kaiser Permanente Addresses This Issue

Every PMG offers wellness programs or activities to encourage a better work-life balance for physicians. At the Colorado Permanente Medical Group (CPMG), for example, a dedicated Licensed Clinical Social Worker acts as a centralized resource to connect physicians and their families to confidential behavioral health care. At Northwest Permanente, which serves patients in Oregon and southern Washington, a health and wellness website provides online resources, health assessment tools, and a schedule of health and wellness lunch-time learning sessions.

The Southern California Permanente Medical

FOUR AREAS OF BURNOUT

- Bureaucratic tasks
- Too many hours at work
- Feeling like a cog in the wheel
- Increased computerization

Source:
[Medscape Lifestyle Report 2017](#),
(Survey of physicians on
top concerns for burnout.)

Group (SCPMG) has designated a “physician chief wellness officer,” a leadership position created specifically to drive its physician wellness work. SCPMG’s physician wellness program includes a robust website with tools and resources, physician “champions,” and a comprehensive program addressing Second Victim Syndrome (the burden physicians feel after an adverse patient outcome).

SCPMG, which has more than 7,200 Permanente physicians, also implemented several operational changes to address bureaucracy and inefficiencies and improve the work environment for doctors.

continued

The Southeast Permanente Medical Group (TSPMG) offers physicians a concierge service designed to provide extra help with errands to allow more time for doctors to spend with family and friends. TSPMG also on-boards new physicians by pairing them with tenured doctors in a year-long mentoring program to cultivate a sense of belonging and equip physicians with resources they need to navigate their new organization.

In Northern California, The Permanente Medical Group's residency program addresses physician wellness among doctors participating in its training programs. Along with creating a personal development plan with mentors, residents take part in a variety of healthy living and eating programs and have access to resources such as gym memberships. A similar program for residents at the Washington Permanente Medical Group recruits third-year residents as "wellness chiefs" who plan educational sessions and activities focused on encouraging well-being among their peers.

The Hawaii Permanente Medical Group offers an annual day of service that connects the organization to the land, people, and history of the islands. This program encompasses the self-care practices of compassion, awe, resilience, and engagement.

The Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group hosts an annual wellness weekend along with a wellness website that houses articles, videos, activities, and events.

On the Horizon

Permanente physician leaders are committed to addressing burnout for doctors from the beginning of their careers. Physician wellness and resilience are key objectives of the Curriculum Committee responsible for designing the Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine – scheduled to open in Pasadena, California.

The School of Medicine has taken a holistic approach to curriculum development that enriches the traditional medical student experience. The school plans to help future physicians develop skills and techniques that can be employed throughout their careers, such as learning how to prepare healthy meals, emphasizing the importance of sleep, and incorporating a personal exercise regimen to promote fitness and reduce stress. The school hopes to develop a culture that eliminates stigma around asking for help and acknowledges when a student is struggling with depression and anxiety.

Selected Publications

Ellison, Edward. "Physician Well-being: A Critical Missing Link in Medical Education," *Permanente Medicine*. September 5, 2017. <https://permanente.org/physician-well-critical-missing-link-medical-education/>

Klau, Mark, Nancy Spiegel, and Dawn Clark. "Healing the Healers," *Permanente Medicine*. June 27, 2017. <https://permanente.org/healing-the-healers/>

Permanente Physician Experts

Our physician experts are available to discuss our promotion of physician wellness.



Edward Ellison, MD, co-CEO, The Permanente Federation; executive medical director and chairman, Southern California Permanente Medical Group; CEO and chairman, The Southeast Permanente Medical Group



Geoffrey Sewell, MD, FACP, chair, National Permanente Executive Committee, The Permanente Federation; president and executive medical director, Hawaii Permanente Medical Group

About the Permanente Medical Groups

The Permanente Medical Groups are composed of more than 21,000 physicians. Our mission is to improve the health of our patients and the communities in which we provide care. We practice in eight self-governed, physician-led, prepaid, multi-specialty medical groups that work with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plans and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals to provide care for more than 11.8 million Kaiser Permanente members. We work collaboratively, enabled by state-of-the-art facilities and technology, to provide preventive and world-class complex care in eight states – from Hawaii to Maryland – and the District of Columbia.

About The Permanente Federation

In 1997, the Permanente Medical Groups formed The Permanente Federation LLC to represent their shared interests. The Federation serves as the key partner on behalf of the medical groups with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals on national initiatives.

Please visit permanente.org.

