

Medscape Physician Burnout & Depression Report 2022 Shows Pandemic's Continued Impact Burnout Increases, especially for ER Physicians; one in five physicians are depressed

New York, NY, Jan 21, 2022: Although stable during the first year of the pandemic, physician rates of burnout increased in 2021, with a sharp rise among physicians in emergency medicine.

The Medscape Physician Burnout & Depression Report 2022: Stress, Anxiety and Anger found a five-percentage point increase in burnout overall, from 42% in 2020 to 47% in 2021, with an increase in ER physician burnout from 43% to 60% last year. Most physicians said that burnout permeates most aspects of their lives, with 54% indicating that the impact was strong to severe, including with their relationships.

Burnout increased for both male and female physicians, from 36% to 41% and 51% to 56%, respectively. Physicians said they cope by exercising (48%), isolating from others (45%), eating junk food (35%) and drinking (24%).

The impact of back-to-work re-openings, including-COVID- related stress, reduced staff, and the anxiety from concern of infecting family members contributed to a burnout rate higher than that of the first year of the pandemic, when quarantines temporarily shuttered clinics and physician offices.

More than 13,000 U.S. physicians across 29 specialties responded to the survey, conducted between June 29 and September 26, 2021. Burnout is described as long-term, unresolved, job-related stress leading to exhaustion, cynicism, detachment from job responsibilities, and lacking a sense of personal accomplishment.

For the full report, click here: <https://www.medscape.com/2022-lifestyle-burnout>

Burnout Causes: Is it the system, or is it physician personality?

While 60% of physicians pointed to overwhelming bureaucratic demands, followed by a lack of respect from administrators, colleagues and staff and long hours, more than one in three connected burnout to their own personality traits or individual frailty, and 23% said they weren't sure. However, 43% discounted this notion. The care of patients with COVID was far less likely to cause burnout and was cited only 12%.

Depression: Why physicians go it alone

As in previous reports, about one in five physicians (21%) said they were depressed; of those, 24% of them clinically and the remainder, 64%, indicating "colloquial" depression, i.e., sadness, feeling down, blue.

More than one-third of all physicians (34%) who reported depression said it leads them to be more easily exasperated with patients and 23% said they are less careful when taking patient notes.

Nearly half of physicians with depression (49%) said they can deal with it on their own, but 43% said they would not seek help due to fears of disclosure to the medical board. About one in five said they worry they would be shunned by the medical profession.

"Although the pandemic has been incredibly challenging for physicians, the second year – when society reopened – proved more difficult to navigate," said Leslie Kane, M.A., Senior Director, Medscape Business of Medicine. "The level of burnout, already high, worsened and took an enormous toll on emergency medicine physicians. It remains a major concern that doctors with depression feel they must go it alone, for fear of professional consequences. Post-pandemic provides an opportunity for the profession to rethink the systems and mindsets that keep physicians stuck in the dissatisfaction and despair of burnout and to make meaningful and lasting change."

Medscape Survey Methods

The 2022 Medscape Physician Burnout & Depression Report was completed by 13,069 U.S. physicians representing more than 29 specialty areas. Respondents were invited to respond to the online survey. The margin of error for the survey was +/- 0.85% at a 95% confidence level.

About Medscape

Medscape is the leading source of clinical news, health information, and point-of-care tools for health care professionals. Medscape offers specialists, primary care physicians, and other health professionals the most robust and integrated medical information and educational tools.