

## Professional Coaching Intervention and the Well-being of Physicians



Burnout is a major problem among physicians. Clinicians who are at the front line of care are especially at high risk. Burnout is not just one simple issue; it can have a negative impact on the quality of care, the patient-doctor relationship, physician productivity, and doctor turnover. There are many factors that could lead to burnout. These include excessive workload, night shifts, administrative burden, work-process inefficiencies, work-home conflicts, organisational culture, lack of autonomy or control, and other work-related stressors.

It is important to promote physician well-being, and this is something that needs to be a shared responsibility between physicians, healthcare organisations and external organisations such as regulatory boards, state medical boards, payers, EHR vendors etc. It is also important to use evidence-based approaches to deal with this problem.

Three approaches have been proposed to help reduce physician burnout. These include coaching, mentorship, and peer support. Mentorship refers to a relationship where one individual with more experience and knowledge guides a less knowledgeable and less experienced individual. Peer support programmes can also be used to assist physicians to understand and deal with different situations that they could come across in the healthcare setting. Coaching is a strategy that is distinct from both mentorship and peer support. Coaching involves inquiry, encouragement, and accountability. The goal of coaching is to increase self-awareness and physician motivation and to help them develop the ability to take effective action when needed.

It is not necessary for coaches to be physicians or to be involved directly in healthcare. The purpose of professional coaching is to focus on the aspects that need to be improved or strengthened and to help individuals navigate their professional life, and move ahead in their career. There are many benefits of using professional coaching. These include improved retention, improved interpersonal relationships, increased job satisfaction, greater organisational commitment, improved communication skills, and increased ability to manage complex situations.

A clinical trial was conducted to investigate the impact of professional coaching on burnout and associated consequences. Study participants in the coaching intervention group received 3.5 hours of professional coaching during a 5-month period. Results from this study show significant reductions in emotional exhaustion scores among participants randomised to the coaching intervention. There was also a significant reduction in high emotional exhaustion among physicians in the intervention group compared to the control group. Symptoms of burnout decreased by 17.1% in the intervention group and increased by 4.9% in the control group. Physicians in the intervention group also showed significant improvement in overall quality of life compared to those in the control group. No major differences were observed in job satisfaction or measures of engagement.

These findings suggest that investment in professional coaching may be useful in healthcare and could help reduce burnout as well as enhance leadership and managerial and interpersonal skills.

Source: [JAMA Internal Medicine](#)

Image Credit: [iStock](#)

Published on : Sun, 18 Aug 2019