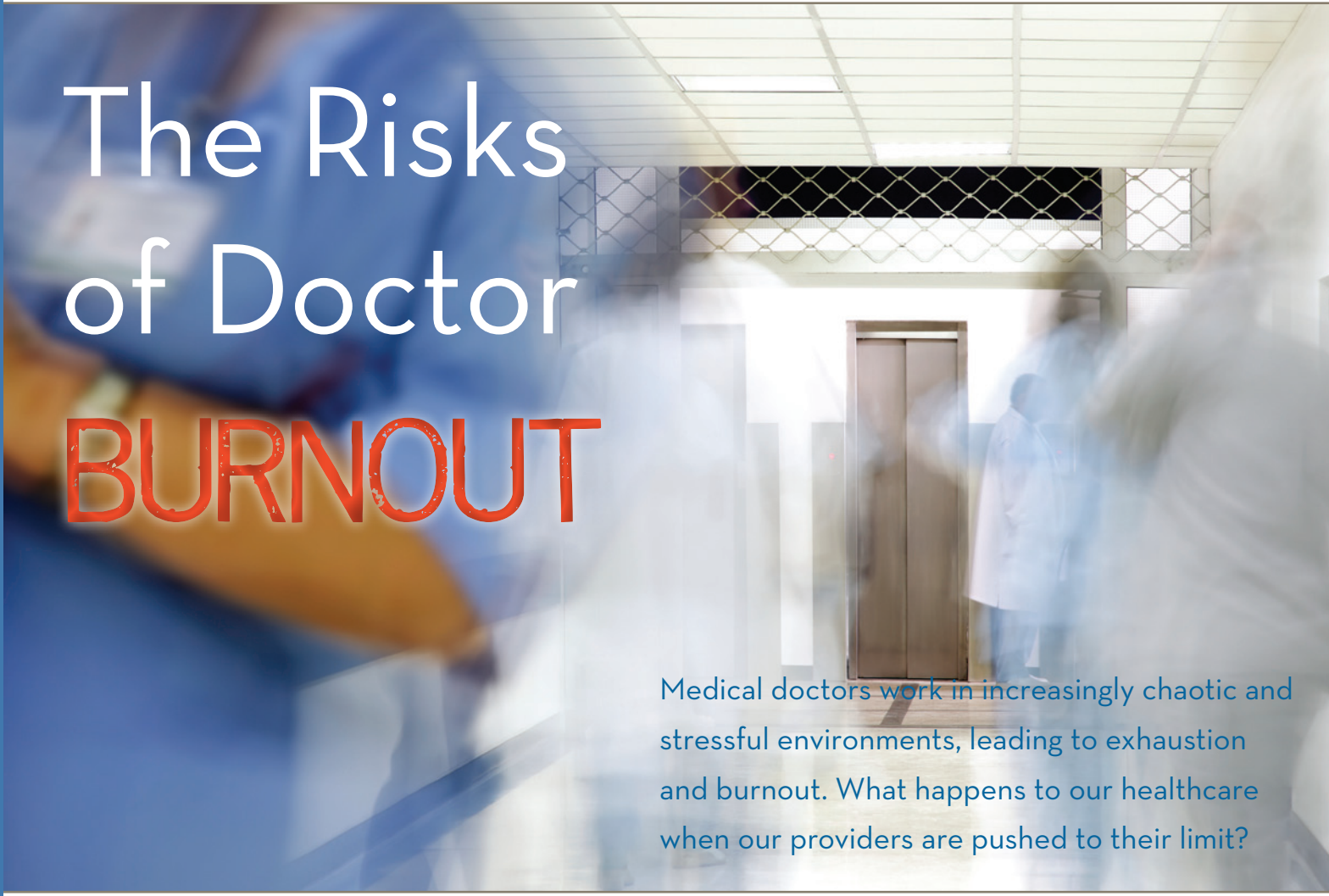


HEALTHCARE HORIZON

The Newsletter of the Minneapolis Medical Research Foundation ~ Summer 2010

The Risks of Doctor BURNOUT



Medical doctors work in increasingly chaotic and stressful environments, leading to exhaustion and burnout. What happens to our healthcare when our providers are pushed to their limit?

Pursuing a career as a medical doctor means embarking on a journey of great challenges and rewards. It requires years of dedication and sacrifice to obtain the education and training necessary to care for patients. Once a doctor has finally earned the required degrees, more time must be spent in residency at a hospital before he or she can finally practice medicine.

However, after all the time and money spent getting to this point, doctors still do not necessarily have an easy living ahead of them. The environment in which medical doctors work has changed dramatically over the past few decades. The amount of time a doctor is given to spend with patients and care for their health problems has been reduced.

At the same time, the number of patients a doctor needs to see to run a successful practice has increased. Medical advancements have vastly improved the care

available to patients, but they have also increased the amount of specialized knowledge a doctor must know in order to offer the miracles of modern medicine to patients. Additionally, increased legal concerns have increased the stress under which doctors operate.

These factors and others have created a very different work environment for doctors compared to what existed even 20 years ago. The demands of a busy and occasionally chaotic work environment lead to high levels of stress and burnout for all medical professionals. Additionally, differences in values and goals between physicians and administrative leadership also can contribute to the stress in a doctor's work environment.

Practicing medicine takes enormous amounts of emotional energy. Watching people suffer and die from disease and injury is a constant drain. If the emotional exhaustion and stress experienced by a doctor get bad

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Make the Most of Your Doctor Visit

It pays to be prepared for your appointments with healthcare providers!

Most of us keep very hectic schedules. Each day we're barraged with work, school, family, and errands. Adding a doctor appointment is just one more complication to an already complicated schedule. But, if you are taking the time to go to your doctor, it's probably to address an important concern. You need to get the best care and answers to your questions in the short amount of time you get to spend with your doctor.

To get the best health care, you need to be your own healthcare advocate. Before you go to see your doctor, it is best to take a few simple steps to prepare for the visit.

Arrive early

It is best to arrive at the clinic for your appointment at least 15 minutes early. This ensures that the medical staff can prepare your information for you and your doctor. Also, to avoid long waits at the clinic, schedule your appointment in the morning. Appointments made earlier in the day are less likely to be delayed because there have been fewer appointments ahead of yours that have run over their scheduled time.

You may be able to save some time if you try to get the first appointment of each clinic session. For example, the first appointment of the morning session may be at 7:30am, while in the afternoon session, it may be at 1pm. Being the first patient of each session may help you avoid long waits at the clinic. Also, have your payment and/or insurance information ready before you get to the clinic.

Make a list

Make a short list of the health concerns you want to discuss with your doctor. When you first meet with your

doctor, tell her your list of health concerns and all the relevant background information that relates to them. If you have many health concerns, plan to break them up over the course of multiple doctor visits. This will ensure you and your doctor have enough time go through each concern thoroughly.

Be prepared to answer questions

Your doctor is likely to ask you a number of questions. Be prepared to answer them. For example, some questions may include: Where does it hurt? When did it start? What does it feel like? How bad is the pain? Does it come and go? Does it get worse or better when you do certain things? Do you have a history of this condition? It is also good to prepare your family history to assist with paperwork and aid you as you discuss health concerns.

Be specific and to the point

Details are important, but only if they relate to your health concern. Share with your doctor any information about your condition that you think may be relevant, but be careful not to start rambling or losing focus discussing unrelated topics - you are paying a lot of money to have a specialist address a problem for you, so stay on topic to make the most of your time and money!

Know your medications

If you are taking any medications, this will be very important information for your doctor to know. Come prepared with a list of all the medications you are taking, or better yet bring them in with you. Know what the dosages are, how frequently you take the medications, when you started taking them, and any side effects you may have from them.

The Risks of Doctor Burnout, Continued

enough, they can eventually lead to a psychological state called depersonalization, in which a person becomes emotionally distant as a way to protect themselves.

However, emotional empathy is vital in practicing medicine. Once doctors begin to depersonalize, the quality of care they give to patients is reduced. Decreased quality of care can lead to both minor and significant medical errors that impact patients' lives and increase medical costs for all of us.

Mark Linzer, MD, has been researching how the quality of work environment affects doctors and patients for years. He recently arrived at the Hennepin County Medical Center and launched a study to examine the issue called Creating Healthy Workplaces. It is funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. He plans to investigate how work environment conditions affect healthcare providers and their patients. Specifically, the study aims to measure the impact that work environment improvements have on:

- 1) Healthcare provider outcomes (how satisfied are healthcare providers and the rate of job turnover)
- 2) Quality of patient care (satisfaction, quality and errors)
- 3) Recruitment and retention of medical professionals and the cost of patient care

Know your doctor

Specifically, know what type of medicine he or she specializes in. Make sure that you are going to the right doctor for the right problem. If you have a sprained ankle, it doesn't make sense to go to a doctor who specializes in oncology (cancer).

He will conduct his research at a number of clinics clustered around northern Wisconsin, Chicago, and New York City. The study will ask participant doctors to assess the quality of their work environment in several key

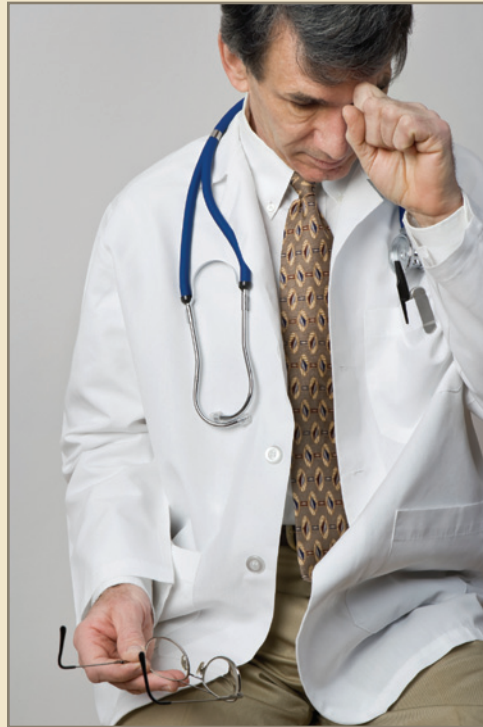
areas, including personal levels of stress and burnout and the doctor's perception of their organization's culture.

Half of the study clinics will participate in a Quality Improvement Intervention (QII) program that will seek to improve key work conditions for doctors, including alleviating time pressure, reducing work place chaos, increasing the amount of personal control a doctor has over his or her work, and developing shared values between clinicians and administrative leadership.

Dr Linzer's team will also interview around eight patients for each physician who participates in the study. He hopes that interviewing the doctors' patients will give further insights into how the conditions of a doctor's work environment impact the care they provide to their patients.

Dr Linzer hopes that the findings of his research will lead to improvements in work conditions for doctors. Doctors make huge personal sacrifices to pursue a career in medicine, and as a society we invest enormously in our

medical care providers. Ensuring that they have work environments that minimize stress will maximize their ability to care for patients. ■

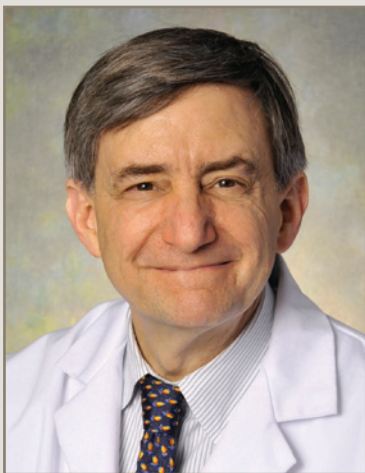


When doctors are over-stressed, the quality of care they give patients may suffer. This in turn can lead to medical errors that impact patients' lives and increase medical costs for us all.

Your relationship with your doctor is very important; your health depends on it! Developing a relationship with your doctor should be seen as a partnership to maximize your health. Use these simple tips when visiting your doctor and you will be well on your way to being your own personal healthcare advocate. ■

Welcome to Mark Linzer, MD

Mark Linzer, MD, (whose work is profiled in the *Risks of Doctor Burnout* article) is a recent arrival to the HCMC campus. Last October he accepted the position of Director, Division of General Internal Medicine in the Department of Medicine at HCMC. He will be conducting his research projects at MMRF.



Mark Linzer, MD

Dr Linzer has worked at many prestigious institutions. In his most recent position, he was a Professor of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, and the Chief of General Internal Medicine Scholars Program at the University. He has also been a Section Chief in General Medicine at Duke University, and since 1993, has had various leadership positions at the University of Wisconsin Medical School.

Dr Linzer earned his undergraduate degree at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, and his MD degree from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland. Following his residency at the Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, New York, he took advanced training in preventive medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, and subsequently had teaching positions at

Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center, Tufts University School of Medicine, and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

In addition to Dr Linzer's leadership positions at Wisconsin and nationally, he is a very active and effective clinician, teacher, and researcher. He is highly regarded as a teacher and he has received teaching awards from students and residents at both Duke University and the University of Wisconsin.

Dr Linzer has over 100 scholarly publications in peer reviewed journals. He has a wide range of interests in scholarly areas, including syncope (the partial or complete loss of consciousness with interruption of awareness of oneself and one's surroundings) and more recently his work on physician's work environment and life. He has been invited to speak on his scholarly work both nationally and internationally.

One of Dr Linzer's interests outside of medicine is music. He is a skilled guitar player and has already started some jam sessions with other HCMC/HFA faculty. Last November he organized a musical benefit night at Trotter's Cafe in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The cozy and welcoming coffee shop was packed as the band played soft 60's songs, bossa nova, blues and folk. Performers included Drs Mark Linzer and Eduardo Colon on acoustic guitar and Drs Steve Hillson and Fred Hall on trumpet. Proceeds were given to support the Hennepin Health Foundation. ■

Can Aspirin Prolong a Healthy Life?



In an effort to extend the length of a disability-free life for older adults, researchers across the United States and Australia have partnered in the largest international trial ever sponsored by the US National Institute on Aging (NIA).

The Aspirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly (ASPREE) study aims to assess whether aspirin can not only prolong life, but a life free of physical disability and/or dementia for healthy older people.

According to ASPREE principal investigator, Dr Richard Grimm, Medical Director of the Berman Center for

Outcomes and Clinical Research, and Professor of Cardiology and Epidemiology at the University of Minnesota, "ASPREE is unprecedented in that it's the largest trial and the first international trial the NIA has ever done. What we learn from this study will help determine whether physicians recommend aspirin as preventive medicine to their older patients."

While it is known that aspirin prevents heart attacks and strokes in people with established heart disease (benefits which clearly outweigh any risks associated with aspirin, such as bleeding) the role of aspirin in people without a history of cardiovascular disease is less certain.

"Because of its proven effectiveness in preventing

Join Us and Give New Meaning to “A Healthy Meal!”

This Fall, doctors and medical experts from Hennepin County Medical Center will lead a series of one hour health care discussions at **Seven Sushi restaurant** in downtown Minneapolis. This is your opportunity to acquire cutting edge information from leading physicians who care for patients, conduct research, and teach tomorrow’s doctors on topics critical to health and well-being.

Registration/Mixer 5:30pm - 6:15pm

Speaker 6:15pm - 7:15pm

Network with the Doctor 7:15pm - 7:45pm

Seven Sushi, 700 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55402 | \$25 per session. All sessions include dinner and a drink. Register now at www.MinnesotaMonthly.com/healthseries



Caring for Aging Parents

Anne M. Murray, MD | Tuesday, September 14

Caring for your family and your aging parents? Dr Anne Murray, a nationally recognized geriatric researcher and physician, will help you understand your changing roles and the impact of memory loss and aging on your loved ones.



Managing the Medicare Maze

Christie M. Cuttell, MSW & Christine A. Pfeifer MHA, CPC | Tuesday, October 12

Do you need Part B to go with your Part A coverage? Maybe Part D for extra prescription coverage or Part C for more security? We’ll help you and your caregivers understand what type of coverage you need and assist you in finding your way through the medicare maze.

Healthy Aging Round Table

Tuesday, November 9

Wondering how we can all benefit from a healthy older population? Experts will discuss topics related to healthy aging and take audience questions. Learn ways to improve your physical, mental, and social fitness as you or your loved ones move through the golden years. ■

second events, many doctors have also prescribed aspirin to prevent heart attacks and strokes in otherwise healthy people,” explains Professor John McNeil, Head of the Monash School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine in Australia, and also a principal investigator for ASPREE.

“However, in the last couple of years, serious doubts have been raised about the evidence supporting this practice, and as a result, editorials in major medical journals have called for this question to be settled.”

The ASPREE study will enroll 6,500 healthy individuals age 70 and over in the US and another 12,500 in Australia.

More information can be found at www.mmrf.org and www.ASPREE.org. ■

In Memorium

The Minneapolis Medical Research Foundation was shocked and saddened by the sudden death this summer of our friend and colleague, John Sauber, Jr.

John was a skilled craftsman and a man of great integrity and kindness. He is deeply missed.