

# Physician well-being improving, but burnout risk remains

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The good news is that physician burnout appears to be improving, along with indicators for physician well-being. However, physicians remain at high risk for burnout, depression and depersonalization, compared to

other professionals. Those are the updated findings from Mayo Clinic researchers and their collaborators that are published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

"This is good news. It shows that burnout is being addressed nationally and programs are having some impact," says Lotte Dyrbye, M.D., Mayo Clinic researcher and senior author of the paper. "Clearly more [organizational change](#) and more research is needed to sustain this trajectory."

Researchers from Mayo Clinic, the American Medical Association and Stanford University collaborated in the national survey of physicians across more than 20 specialties to assess any changes between the previous study in 2014 and the original survey in 2011. While burnout varies by specialist, overall reported levels of burnout and satisfaction with work-life integration improved between 2014 and 2017—but only to 2011 levels. The researchers say individual and organizational efforts have improved the situation, but more work needs to be done.

Burnout encompasses many aspects but includes the areas of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, distress and depression. Extreme cases of burnout can lead to medical errors affecting patients, job loss and suicide. Survey responders say the demands of updating [electronic health records](#) are a major factor in burnout. These demands limit the time physicians can spend with patients, and that affects career satisfaction.

More than 30,000 physicians were invited to participate in the electronic survey. Roughly 17 percent (5,197) responded, and a second attempt to reach nonrespondents gained 248 more participants. Questions mirrored those on the previous surveys.

Researchers say the reason for the change may be due to physicians adapting to the new work environments over the three-year period. Also,

much progress may be attributed to interventional programs to stem [burnout](#) in hospitals and other facilities. Conversely, they say the indicators may have improved because many distressed physicians have left the profession.

**More information:** Tait D. Shanafelt et al, Changes in Burnout and Satisfaction With Work-Life Integration in Physicians and the General US Working Population Between 2011 and 2017, *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.mayocp.2018.10.023](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2018.10.023)

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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