

# Frontline healthcare workers need breaks

April 13 2020, by Hailey Womer

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The co-author of research on the [health benefits of vacation](#) says the same holds true for health care workers in our current climate, who can benefit from even small breaks to combat the pandemic's emotional toll.

Bryce Hruska, assistant professor of public health at Syracuse

University's Falk College, studies the mental benefits of taking a break. While most of us can identify with the feeling of getting away from [stressful situations](#), Hruska has studied the actual beneficial impact this has on our health. His initial research was published last year, and drew direct correlations between a vacation from work and positive benefits to a person's heart health. Hruska says research also proves this benefit is realized even during small breaks, which he says are vital right now especially for [health care workers](#) who will likely see an increasingly difficult workload.

"Just as hospitals must ensure that adequate material resources are in place to manage patient influx, they must also ensure that systems are in place to provide [healthcare workers](#) with opportunities to manage and restore their personal psychological and emotional resources. Under normal conditions, healthcare workers are disproportionately impacted by occupational stress and emotional burnout owing to the demands and responsibilities associated with administering [patient care](#). This may become all the more pronounced under acutely taxing conditions such as the current pandemic. One consistent finding from the research literature is that healthcare workers can effectively counter the emotional toll of the job if provided with time for recovery from the day's tasks. This includes ensuring time for adequate sleep as well as building in sufficient downtime during which they can process the day's events and "switch off" from the day's demands. These practices not only protect against decrements in performance, attention, and memory, but they also promote opportunities to derive meaning from the day's experiences which can promote resilience in the face of stressful circumstances. Attesting to this importance, [recent reports](#) from China document the need that healthcare workers express for recovery time from the job. Importantly, measures addressing this need often consisted of relatively brief, but dedicated periods of time and [physical space](#) in the hospitals allowing for rest and reflection. As these reports demonstrate, while the current pandemic places an urgency on the

delivery of care to those in need of it, the best way to ensure consistent and effective care over the ensuing weeks and possibly months is to tend to the workers responsible for delivering it. As hospitals across the U.S. prepare for anticipated strain due to surging COVID-19 cases, it is important that they do not neglect their most important asset: the [healthcare](#) workers responsible for delivering care."

Provided by Syracuse University

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