Introduction and Objective

- Over the past several years, several studies have been published about the high incidence of physician burnout in the United States. The Rotenstein report® of 2018 reported burnout rates as high as 67%, while the 2018 Medscape Burnout & Depression Report® reported a 40% burnout rate. Different aspects have been studied, such as the environments where burnout is higher, female versus male prevalence, specializations that are more prone, and many others.
- Our literature surveys have found that several organizations recommend physician wellness programs and talk about the potential benefits in coping with physician burnout. However, very few studies seem to have been conducted to measure the effects of a wellness program, particularly a wellness education program.
- There is a need to study ways to mitigate or manage burnout.

Objective

- This study seeks to establish a baseline of the level of burnout in a cohort of physicians, and examine factors that seem to play a part in burnout. It then seeks to validate the hypothesis that increasing awareness and educating physicians in strategies to manage burnout will prevent/decrease incidence and intensity of burnout and promote physician well-being.

Methods

- A survey modeled after the Maslach Burnout Inventory® was created to assess prevalence and attitudes towards burnout.
- 56 surveys were filled out by medical professionals at the November 2018 American Association of Pediatrics conference.
- Demographic data was gathered about the primary work environment, number of years in practice, and gender. This data was used as the independent variable to analyze data.
- Seven questions evaluating physicians' feeling of self worth, three questions about level of participation in wellness activities, and five questions about burnout experience were used to generate a total Self Worth score, a total Wellness Activities score, and a total Burnout score.
- These scores were averaged and graphed based on primary work environment, number of years in practice, and gender.
- Data was used to draw the conclusions depicted in this report.
- Education about burnout and wellness was provided locally during the conference through an information booth, handouts, and discussions.
- A monthly newsletter about wellness will seek to inspire growth in wellness among respondents over the next 6 months.
- Respondents will be surveyed again and data will be analyzed.

Results

- 100% reported at least moderate levels of burnout
- 60% reported participation of at least moderate levels of wellness activities
- Burnout experience was significantly lower in those with less than 5 years and those with over 20 years of experience.
- Self worth was highest in those with over 20 years experience and lowest in those with 15-20 years.
- Analysis based on Primary Work Environment:
- Analysis based on Number of Years in practice:
- Analysis based on Gender:

Discussion (continued)

- Though there is no control population, the aim is to identify physicians with burnout, analyze factors that could affect burnout, and reinforce those factors. In this context, lack of a control does not appear to be an issue.
- Once this study establishes that these interventions are effective, larger, controlled studies will help solidify the hypothesis.
- Pediatrics is a microcosm of several other specialties, so the results of this study may be transportable to other areas. However, caution should be exercised in generalizing results:

  - There are many specific aspects of various specialties that may warrant different variations of strategies. So, 'one size may not fit all,' but one general design might help form a template.
  - Primary work environment results need larger studies to be able to generalize, due to the small number of data points.

Conclusions

- Data gathered in this survey showed consistency with reports about prevalence of burnout in terms of gender and years in practice.
- Primary work environment does not appear to affect burnout.
- Burnout experience is less at the beginning of the career, rises dramatically after 5 years, and gradually decreases as physicians gain more experience.
- Burnout is inversely correlated to feelings of self worth as well as wellness activities.
- Self worth and wellness activity scores are lower among females. However, burnout is much more in females.
- The most revealing finding in this study is that burnout is closely linked to feelings of self worth. It will be interesting to study if increasing participation in wellness activities would help increase feelings of self worth, and in turn decrease burnout experience.
- Excessive time pressure and wellness being lower priority combine to make physicians more vulnerable to burnout, which indicates that the planned interventions should have a positive effect on wellness outcomes.

Acknowledgements

- Dr. Allen Friedland, MD, FACP, FAAP. Director, Medicine-Pediatrics Residency; Professor of Medicine-Pediatrics, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University
- Dr. Himani Divatia, DO, FACP, FAAP. Associate Program Director, Medicine-Pediatrics Residency; Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine – Pediatrics, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University (Class of 2015)
- Dr. Tina Hu, MD. Resident, Medicine-Pediatrics Residency; Professor of Medicine-Pediatrics, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University
- Many thanks to Dr. Wayne Bond Lau, MD, FAAEM, FACEP, Director, Clinical Translational Research, SKMC, for his guidance and support.

References