

Wellness Opportunities: Sometimes It Is “Just Time Off”

As we embark on a systematic wellness initiative for our anesthesia residents and fellows, we read the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* article by Abedini et al¹ with substantial interest. The discussion of circumstantial versus existential burnout within our trainees (and ourselves) provides a valuable framework for curriculum development and innovation. This article, and others like it, also provides an outstanding basis for discussion as we improve resident and faculty awareness of burnout and engagement with interventions. Although the article does an exceptional job outlining potential programmatic interventions that may reduce burnout, we would like to reemphasize the importance of simple, scheduled “time off.”

At the Mayo Clinic, we have initiated a pilot program that provides several time-protected, half-day blocks for residents as they rotate through the pain clinic. These blocks are unstructured and designated simply for activities that residents identify as contributing to their wellness. Managing patients with chronic pain can lead to emotional exhaustion,² and we believe residents should be taught not only the principles of quality patient care but also the importance of focused self-care during this rotation. In response to an informal survey we conducted 3 months after implementation of our pilot of protected

time, the majority of residents reported using this time for participating in family activities, such as spending time with their children, and engaging in physical activity, which has been shown to improve quality of life.³ Feedback for the pilot program has been overwhelmingly positive, and residents have expressed appreciation for the contribution of this time off to their overall wellness.

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References

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