



# Burnout in Emergency Medicine Physicians

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## Physician Burnout

- Burnout: A psychological syndrome from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment. Can also include cynicism (Stehman, et al., 2019)
- Physicians are given no room for mistakes
- Focus shifted to electronic health records
- Debt
- Second victim syndrome
- About 1 in 2 U.S. physicians have at least one symptom of burnout

## Why Emergency Physicians?

- Emergency medicine has one of the highest rates of physician burnout
- 60% of emergency physicians report burnout compared to the 38% in general practices
- 40% of emergency physicians report high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization
- This profession includes many sleep disturbances, psychologically demanding situations, and reported low social support at work
- The average ED physician lifespan is 58.7 years versus the PCP average of 80.3 years

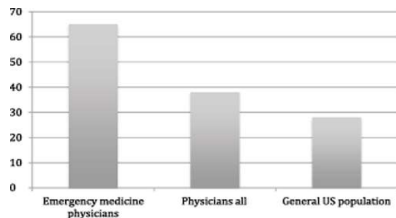


Figure 1 "Review Article: Burnout in emergency medicine physicians"

## COVID-19 Effect

- New fear of infecting family
- Lack of resources for family care
- Massive increase in workload
- Reliance on less-experienced residents

Maslach Score for the first (pre-pandemic) group (N = 84)

Index	High score	Medium score	Low score	Mean (SD)
Emotional exhaustion, n (%)	57 (69%)	15 (18%)	12 (12%)	29 (1.5)
Depersonalization, n (%)	31 (37%)	24 (29%)	27 (32%)	10 (0.8)
Personal accomplishment, n (%)	49 (49%)	29 (35%)	4 (5%)	40 (0.5)

**Bold** - score indicating high burnout

Maslach score for the second (pandemic) group (N = 93)

Index	High score	Medium score	Low score	Mean (SD)
Emotional exhaustion, n (%)	79 (85%)	13 (14%)	1 (1%)	36 (1.8)
Depersonalization, n (%)	55 (59%)	26 (31%)	12 (13%)	13 (0.8)
Personal accomplishment, n (%)	85 (91%)	8 (9%)	0 (0%)	44 (1.6)

**Bold** - score indicating high burnout

Figures 2 and 3. "Emergency medicine physician burnout before and during the COVID-19 pandemic"

## Effects on Patients

- Burnout decreases physician empathy
- Decreased professionalism
- Higher rates of physician turnover
- Doubles patient safety incidents

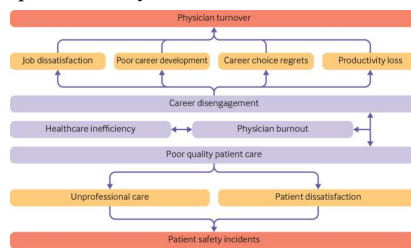


Figure 4. "Associations of physician burnout with career engagement and quality of patient care: systematic review and meta-analysis"

## Consequences of Burnout

- Physicians are leaving medicine
- Untreated clinical depression
  - 40% do not seek help for fear of losing their license
- 12.9% of male physicians and 21.9% of female physicians suffer with alcohol abuse
- Up to 18% of physicians treated for substance abuse are emergency physicians
- 2019 study found 14% considered suicide, and 1% attempted
  - Suicide is the second leading cause of death among residents
  - 1 in 7 emergency physicians report suicidal thoughts

## Solutions

- Supporting part-time and flexible schedules
- Do not expect physicians to take work home
- Hour limits
- Staff to support in documentation, such as scribes
- Physician leadership in an ED
- Teach positive coping strategies
- Physician small-groups

## Sources

