

Harnessing the Power of Social Networks to Promote Self-Care & Prevent/Reduce Burnout in Residents

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Physician burnout is bad for physicians and their patients. The ACGME has asked residency training programs (RTPs) to bolster their self-care programs to prevent/reduce burnout. Social Network Theory (SNT) recognizes that behavior spreads interpersonally and interventions that harness distributive properties of social networks are most effective. We hypothesize that a SNT-based intervention will improve self-care and prevent/reduce burnout among JHUSOM residents. Our intervention will target influential individuals within 2 RTPs using the validated “nominated friend targeting method” to identify a 5% sample among JHBMC IM (n=48) and JHH psychiatry residents (n=48). These 6 “nominated friend” residents will participate in monthly group sessions in which they receive direct guidance and role modeling of self-care by study team leaders (e.g., sharing recent self-care activities, discussion of self-care and burnout articles, group self-care activities). During the 6-month study period, “nominated friends” will send weekly updates to their fellow residents describing how they engaged in self-care during the previous week (using a structured template developed by the study team). Before and after exposure to the program, each resident (N=96) will self-assess: (i) level of engagement in self-care (number/duration of self-care activities/past 1 week), (ii) valuation of self-care for burnout prevention/reduction, and (iii) confidence in their ability to role model self-care to others (including medical students and patients). Concurrently, they will also complete a validated instrument to measure burnout. The results of the study will expand understanding about promoting wellness in medicine, and inform practices about using SNT to disseminate curricular priorities.