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NNEW YORK, JANUARY 17, 2018 – Nearly two-thirds of U.S. physicians report feeling burned out, depressed – or both – with one in three physicians admitting that their feelings of depression have an impact on how they relate to patients and colleagues, according to the first Medscape National Report on Physician Burnout and Depression.

With more than 15,000 practicing physicians responding across 29 specialties, the majority of physicians reported experiencing burnout (42%), depression (15%) or both (14%), with higher rates reported by women and mid-career physicians. The Medscape report defined burnout as feelings of physical, emotional or mental exhaustion, frustration or cynicism about work, and doubts about one's experience and the value of one's work.

• To view the report, click here: : <https://www.medscape.com/2018-lifestyle-burnout-depression>

Regarding depression, 12% of physicians said they "feel down," and 3% said they experience serious depression. Recent statistics for the general U.S. population show that 6.7% of adults experience depressive feelings.¹ The majority of physicians citing depression in the Medscape report said their work was the cause. In fact, a separate Medscape survey on [Physician Lifestyle and Happiness](#) found that most physicians are happy when they aren't working.

The highest rates of burnout were found among family physicians, intensivists, internists, neurologists, and ob-gyns. The lowest rates were among plastic surgeons, dermatologists, pathologists, and ophthalmologists. Burnout rates were higher among women (48% vs. 38% for men) and physicians ages 45-50 (50% vs. 35% for younger physicians and 41% for those ages 55-69.)

Impact of Burnout, Depression on Patient Care

Research has shown a consistent relationship between higher levels of physician burnout and lower levels of patient safety and quality of care.²

The Medscape Physician Burnout and Depression Report also found that depression affects patient care. One in three depressed physicians said they are more easily exasperated by patients; 32% said they were less engaged with patients; and 29% admitted to being less friendly. Nearly 15% admitted that their depression might cause them to make errors they wouldn't ordinarily make, and 5% linked it to errors they had made that could have harmed a patient.

Even larger numbers of physicians said that depression takes a toll on their relationships with colleagues, with 42% reporting exasperation, another 42% indicating less engagement, and 37% reporting they express their frustrations in front of staff or peers.

"The Medscape Report on Physician Burnout and Depression shows that there is still much to be done to support physicians around these issues," said Leslie Kane, MA, senior director of Medscape's Business of Medicine. "Physicians are still struggling with the impact of burnout. Additionally, depression among physicians is a concern. Experts are beginning to view both conditions as inter-related, with burnout perhaps being a type of depression that physicians feel more comfortable acknowledging."

Causes of Burnout, and How Physicians Cope

The majority of physicians (56%) said that fewer bureaucratic tasks and fewer hours spent working (39%) would help alleviate burnout. About one-third of physicians said more money and a more manageable work schedule would make a difference.

Most physicians do not seek professional help for either burnout or depression. To cope, about half of all physicians choose healthy strategies, including exercise and talking with family or friends. That said, one-third eat junk food, and one in five drink alcohol or binge eat.

To view the full Medscape National Report on Physician Burnout and Depression, visit: <https://www.medscape.com/2018-lifestyle-burnout-depression>

1) Major Depression Among Adults, National Institutes of Mental Health.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/major-depression-among-adults.shtml>

2) Salyers, M.P., Bonfils, K.A., Luther, L. et al. The Relationship Between Professional Burnout and Quality and Safety in Healthcare: A meta-analysis. J GEN INTERN MED (2017) 32: 475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-016-3886-9>

Medscape Survey Methods:

The 2018 Medscape National Report on Physician Burnout and Depression was completed by 15,543 physicians representing 29 specialty areas, including Medscape members and nonmembers. Respondents were invited to respond to the online survey. The margin of error for the survey was +/- 0.79% at a 95% confidence level.

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