

Re-discovering Meaning in Medicine -- on burnout, mindfulness and joy

Category: Invited Presentation

Abstract Body

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Burnout currently affects over half of all physicians in Canada. Working within a paradigm of patient centered care, we habitually sacrifice ourselves, our feelings and, at times, the very resources that offer us a sense of connection and meaning in the bigger container of our lives. In Addiction Medicine this burnout is compounded by the moral distress of the toxic overdose crisis, and the helplessness that can arise from witnessing the profound impact of determinants of health, trauma and stigma on the people we work with. Burnout carries us to a precipice of numbness, and deprives us of the privilege and blessing that abounds in our work. Healing from burnout requires us to compassionately attend to the suffering that is here, and begin to wake up into our common humanity and understand, once again, the deeper meaning that brought us into this profession. We need to learn to grieve, to feel and share our experiences with colleagues, and to re-discover the beauty amidst the tragedies we face. Once we can begin to accept our own suffering, strength and wholeness, we can better attend to these in others -- our patients, our colleagues, our families. This is how we heal.

In this plenary we will explore burnout, and understand its development in ourselves and our culture. We will describe stress reactivity and response, and introduce the practices of mindfulness and self-compassion as accessible human tools of healing and awakening, in order to uncover the meaning, joy and sense of connection that we seek -- in our work and in our lives. In the accompanying workshop, we will practice several accessible tools to use in the midst of our clinical work, in order to create pause and perspective, and to maintain this connection amidst the busyness and challenge.

Key Words

- Behavioural Interventions
- Caring in Crisis
- Policy
- Primary Care
- Quality Improvement

Learning Objective # 1

Understand Burnout -- its definition, consequences and research on causes and potential management

Learning Objective # 2

Recognize mindfulness and self compassion as evidence based skillsets towards navigating burnout and improving practitioner wellness

Reference # 1

Mindfulness-Based Interventions to Reduce Burnout and Stress in Physicians: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis May 2021 *Academic medicine: journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges* 96(5):751-764

Reference # 2

Do Mindfulness and Self-Compassion Predict Burnout in Pediatric Residents? Kathi J. Kemper et al, *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 94, No. 6 / June 2019

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