Work-Life Balance
How to find it and how to keep it
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Disclosures

1. I have no financial disclosures to make.
2. I have the experience to provide this lecture
because I am part of the statistics and strive to be
part of the solution.

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Work-life Balance (WLB): A History

- Manufacturing laws of the 1800s
- Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938
- Women’s Liberation Movement (1980s)
- Modern Concept

WLB in Physicians

- Physician Work-Life Study
  - April 1998
  - National meeting of the Society of General Internal Medicine
  - Further broken down into Work Lives of Women Physicians

Work Lives of Women Physicians

- Female physicians were found to:
  - Have more female patients
  - Have patients with more complex psychosocial problems
  - Have the same number of complex medical patients
Work Lives of Women Physicians

- Female physicians:
  - Experienced more time pressure (36% more time needed compared to 21% for male docs)
  - Reported less work control
  - Made approximately $22,000 less than men.
  - Had 1.6x the odds of reporting burnout

Advice from Women Physicians

- Don’t bring work home. When I work late or get stuck at work, we try to have a family dinner in the hospital cafeteria to spend time together. - Dr. M., Trauma Surgeon
- I blocked my schedule to be at every kid’s event I could so I wasn’t the only mom not there. - Dr. S., Breast Surgeon
- I began to work part time to spend more time with my family. - Dr. J., Family Medicine

“Occupational Integrity”

- A Canadian study in 2008 proposed that WLB be thought of in terms of integrity, rather than balance.
Occupational Integrity: Another Perspective on “Life Balance”

- Occupational integrity is defined as integrating into one's occupational choices the values that matter most.

More Sage Advice

- I liked our ceramic nights! - Dr. T., Clinical Pharmacist
- I set aside money from each paycheck to go towards a vacation and 4 times a year we spend time away, work-free. - Dr. K., ER physician
- Get or stay involved in your favorite hobby. - Dr. J., family physician
- Take time to sit down and have dinner as a family. - Dr. D, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon
Burnout and Satisfaction With WLB Among US Physicians Relative to the General US Population

Shanafelt, et al published a study in 2012 that compared burnout and satisfaction with WLB among US physicians and compared it to the general population of the United States.

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Shanafelt (2012)

- 27,276 physicians received surveys
- 7,288 completed the survey (26.7%)
- The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to assess the data

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Maslach Burnout Inventory

- Proprietary, so I can’t show it to you!
- Consists of 22 items
- Used to assess burnout in human service, education, business, and government occupations.
- Takes 10-15 minutes to administer.
Comparison to Population

- When compared to population controls, physicians were older, more likely to be male, and more likely to be married.

- Physicians worked a median of 10 hours more per week.

- 40.1% of physicians vs. 23.1% of population did not think their work schedule left enough time for personal or family life.

- Men and women in the population were equally dissatisfied. Female physicians were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied.
The study also asked a 2-item section to measure burnout and found that physicians were at higher risk for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and overall burnout.

Lower risks for burnout overall: being older, being married, lower hours worked.

Level of education

Almost 1 in 2 physicians experienced symptoms of burnout.

Little evidence available about how to fix the problem.

Is the problem us or the system?

Do we need to fix us or the system?
More Sage Advice

1. I watch HappyDoctorMD on YouTube. - Dr. S., family medicine
2. I leave notes behind for my family while I’m working on a shift so they know I’m thinking of them. - Dr. K., EM physician
3. I allow him time to decompress when he comes home from a shift before I get on him about the issues at home. He’ll talk when he’s ready. - Mrs. H., EM physician spouse


Shanafelt and his colleagues published a follow-up paper in 2015 gathering similar research 3 years after the first paper.

Shanafelt (2015)

35,922 physicians received an invitation to participate.
6,880 (19.2%) completed
54.4% of physicians had at least 1 symptom of burnout. (45.5% previously)
40.9% of physicians were satisfied with WLB (48.5%)
Shanafelt (2015)

1. Physicians again were more likely to be older, male, and married compared to the population cohort.
2. Similarly the physicians were still working 10 hours more per week.
3. Physicians continued to have higher rates of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and overall burnout.
Conclusion is that burnout and satisfaction with WLB are getting worse.

Now MORE than half of US physicians experience professional burnout.
Words of Wisdom

“Medicine is both a demanding and a rewarding profession.”

Physicians Must Care For Themselves to Truly Help Others

- Craig Wax, DO wrote a blog for Medical Economics dealing with this topic.
- He recommended the following:
  - Find your motivation
  - Put your well-being first
  - Make a plan
  - Persistence
  - Monitor your progress

Work-Life Balance: A Laudable - and Laughable - Goal

- Jennifer Frank, MD submitted an essay to Medical Economics May 15, 2017 issue which won second place in their Physician’s Writing Contest
Dr. Frank’s Words of Wisdom

“We are most integrated - all the parts of us connected - when we honor and acknowledge the fluid nature of our lives.”

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Helpful Hints

- Cut out the Tech
- Use Vacation Time (Wisely)
- Carve out Time for Critical Tasks
- Start Each Day off Right
- Set Aside Time for Breaks

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Helpful Hints

- Know Your Limits
- Outsource/Consider Delegating
- Clean Up Your Space
- Rely on Your Colleagues
- Make Time for “Self Care” Outside of Work

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Helpful Hints

1. Ask for Input
2. Accept the Things You Can’t Change
3. It’s OK to Do Something Just Because You Like It
4. Let Go of Something Before You Take More On

Helpful Hints

1. Engage in Healthy Activities
2. Be Present
3. Cultivate a Support System

Practical Applications

1. So how do I make this happen in my own life?
References


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