

# How to Address the “S” Word Among Physician Wellness through Partnerships

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Stigma is associated with a multitude of both physical and mental health issues. We hear it, we see it, we live it. We also fight hard to work against it by educating and advocating. Stigma occurs on multiple levels from personal, interpersonal, organizational, and societal. This is even more pronounced in healthcare. Negative attitudes, lack of awareness, and workplace culture all play into the hurdles we face to address physician burnout. In a time during one of our nation’s greatest pandemics, physicians and other healthcare staff are our frontline heroes. But even heroes need help sometimes, and, more importantly, feel safe enough to ask for it.

Physician burnout is, in part, due to the nature of the profession with intense school and training, long hours, on-call, litigation, licensure, concern for medical errors, and not to forget, the COVID-19 pandemic. But burnout is not an individual issue. While there are programs that work to help build resilience in physicians such as LifeBridge, the healthcare system as a whole has an obligation to work to help mitigate controllable factors. “Toughing it out” and “sucking it up” are fostering the already competitive and driven nature of physicians. Workplace culture can contribute to thoughts of help-seeking as a moral failure. Physicians enter the field of medicine as a calling to help others, but who is helping them?

In my short time so far at LifeBridge, I’ve seen the astounding support and advocacy for physician wellness from hospitals, healthcare systems, payers, and physicians themselves. I’ve also realized the incredible mountain of stigma among healthcare professionals seeking help for their own mental wellbeing that we have yet to climb. Partnerships, support,

and respect for other programs must occur to help chip away at that mountain. Medicine and healthcare administration are competitive industries. To be the best, you must perform the best; this motto is instilled in our everyday lives. But if we don’t work together to address physician wellness, healthcare systems won’t have the workforce to perform at their best level. Just as team-approached care is beneficial for a patient, team-based approaches to physician wellness are beneficial for our doctors.

Using the Stanford WellMD Model, the American Medical Association gives steps for creating organizational foundation for Joy in Medicine:

## Create a Culture of Wellness:

1. Engage Senior Leadership
2. Track the Business Case for Well-being
3. Resource a Wellness Infrastructure
4. Measure Wellness and the Predictors of Burnout Longitudinally
5. Strengthen Local Leadership
6. Develop and Evaluate Interventions

## Efficiency of Practice:

7. Improve Workflow Efficiency and Maximize the Power of Team-Based Care
8. Reduce Clerical Burden and Tame the EHR Personal Resilience
9. Support the Physical and Psychosocial Health of the Workforce



**If you are interested in learning tools to help you prevent burnout, call our confidential line at: 1-888-569-2036**

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