



AHA TRANSFORMATION TALKS

STRATEGIES FOR REIMAGINING HEALTH CARE

Foundations for success in achieving clinical workforce resilience

COVID-19 has taken a prolonged and unprecedented toll on front-line caregivers.

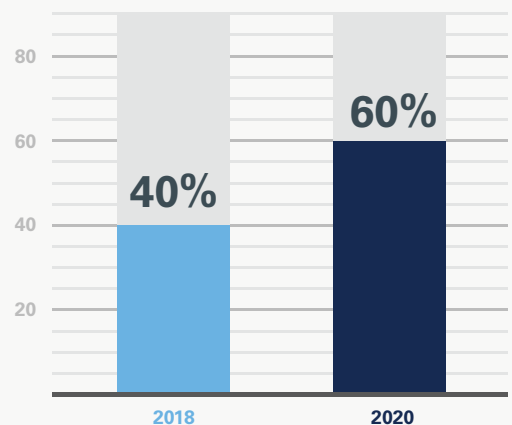
What began in March as a physical and emotional sprint for physicians, nurses and others, by summer felt like a marathon as the pandemic's second wave hit. The third wave now has the physical and emotional feel of a triathlon, with record numbers of daily confirmed COVID-19 diagnoses and deaths being reported.

At the same time, hospitals and health systems face the greatest financial threat in U.S. history as rising costs for treating COVID-19 patients collide with the impact of earlier shutdowns or slowdowns of many elective procedures and services. Shortages of personal protective equipment have added another layer of deep concern for caregivers worried about protecting their own health and that of their families.

This sustained high-stress environment has intensified clinical workforce burnout challenges, which were significant before the pandemic began. Nearly 60% of physicians now report often feeling burned out — up from 40% just two years ago, according to a Physicians Foundation survey conducted in August.

The cumulative effect of this environment also has the potential to interfere with clinicians' ability to connect with patients' physical, emotional and spiritual needs. At this critically important juncture, health care leaders are being counted on to remove barriers that add complications to clinicians' work — be they technological, bureaucratic or administrative in nature.

Physician Burn Out



Physicians Foundation survey, 08/2020

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The well-being of physicians, nurses and other caregivers must be a top strategic priority for hospital and health system leaders, with emphasis on creating an optimal experience for caregivers and patients. The goal should be to capitalize on what is going well and to do what's needed to increase joy in caregivers' daily work.

The most basic solutions to address some of clinicians' top concerns include:



Hear me: Listen to and act on health care professionals' (HCPs) expert perspective and front-line experience, and understand and address their concerns to the extent that leaders are able.



Protect me: Reduce the risk of HCPs acquiring the virus and/or being a portal of transmission to their loved ones.



Support me: Provide support that acknowledges human limitations in a time of extreme work hours, uncertainty and intense exposure to critically ill patients.



Care for me: Provide holistic support for the individual and the family should they need to be quarantined.

By improving the safety and well-being of front-line caregivers, patients are far more likely to receive appropriate and personalized care. Once providers feel supported, they can return their full focus to what drives their work in the first place: caring for others and reconnecting with compassion and providing support.

To learn more, visit our AHA Transformation Talks [resources page](#).

Discussion Questions:

1. **What barriers do clinical teams face in improving well-being and resilience in the current environment? What are your teams doing to support each other and patients through this time?**
2. **What is needed today to develop an organizational focus on restoring joy to the work of front-line caregivers while simultaneously reducing the technological, bureaucratic and administrative burden on them?**
3. **What are the most important factors in daily work that connect physicians and the caregiver team to a sense of purpose, meaning and joy as they continue to manage through the pandemic?**
4. **How can health care leaders protect the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of caregivers during the pandemic?**
5. **What leadership qualities are most needed to support caregiver teams?**