

## **A Message from the AAAAI Wellness Group**

### **Video Transcript**

Hi, my name is Dr. Theresa Bingemann, and I'm part of the wellness group of the AAAAI. I'm here with a message on provider wellness.

As you may know, physician burnout has been estimated in about 46% of all physicians, with a higher percentage in female physicians. During this time of uncertainty, there are concerns that burnout will increase. There's fear of contracting coronavirus, there's fear of sharing it with your family. There's fear of financial burdens, as well as not knowing how long this is going to go on. When we're faced with uncertainty and lack of control, it's really important to remember that we are all experiencing this, although in different ways, and that we need to be kind and patient and compassionate with each other.

You need to remember that you're probably not going to be as productive as you were at baseline, and working from home comes with its own unique set of challenges. You may be trying to supervise staff or trainees or colleagues from different locations. You might be going in to your office and trying to manage PPE and keeping your patients, your staff, and yourself healthy. You may be managing anxiety among your staff about what will the financial implications of this be? Will I be safe? How's my family going to manage? If you're working from home, you may be trying to figure out how to homeschool and do that while also being productive. It's also important to model wellness during this time. One way you can do that is by maintaining a schedule and making sure you're getting up and showering every day even if you're not leaving the house. Make sure you're checking in with your staff and see if they have questions or concerns.

In previous pandemics, people have had increased stress when they felt like they weren't getting enough accurate information regarding what was happening, or how to keep themselves safe. So as much as we can communicate with each other useful information in a timely fashion, that may help reduce anxiety. We know that in previous pandemics and earlier in China, the data from Wuhan shows that healthcare providers had a high degree of psychological distress. There was fear, there was anxiety, there was uncertainty. This was increased for people who haven't had these challenges before, and those that managed this before were having an even harder time.

If you are struggling, don't hesitate to get professional help. There are also resources through the AAAAI, things like the Physician Wellness Toolkit that can help provide some resources if you just need some suggestions. There's also a new COVID wellness document that is available. There are apps that are available free of charge to physicians, for example, Ten Percent Happier, Headspace, and The Art of Living all have free apps that you can use at this time. Local institutions may be providing resources and state, local, and national medical societies are also available to help. If you're feeling isolated during this time, please don't hesitate to reach out to friends. Try to connect with people over social media. Consider moving some of your previous activities to online meetings or events. For example, I did yoga with a friend who is a yoga instructor via FaceTime last night. My husband gets together with his med school classmates via a Zoom chat every Sunday night. I'm part of a book club which we are now going to move online, so we can still get together. When you're online, consider what you're consuming. Don't spend too much time on sites that are causing you stress or things that are creating a strong negative emotional reaction, so limit your diet of news that you find stressful.

Make sure you're doing things you enjoy. Spend time with family. Spend time doing things that filled you up in the past. You could consider a meditation or spirituality practice. You can consider learning a new activity. One thing we have talked about here is while working from home, perhaps you could use the time that you would commute to learn a new skill. As I mentioned earlier, remember we're all experiencing this together, albeit in different ways. You can reach out to a colleague to provide support, or to find a meaningful connection if you feel that's what you need.

We are all trying to creatively adapt to keep practices running to continue research and educational endeavors. I'm hoping that through this, we'll all develop new skills that will help us be even more successful in the future. If you're struggling, one last thing to consider is that you can list three things that you're grateful for each day. A friend mentioned not to forget that we're all grateful to have toilet paper these days. Locally, I've seen several things to inspire gratitude. We've had chalk drawings outside the hospital that were encouraging messages. Locally, I also saw a parade put together by police officers and firemen, where they lit up the trucks and vehicles going outside the hospital. I'm also seeing online places where people are recognizing heroes and the work people do to support each other each day.

So maintain social distancing. Wash your hands frequently. Don't touch your face. Please stay well. And please seek help if you need it. Thank you for listening.

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