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Attention Medical Students You Are Not Alone

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ATTENTION MEDICAL STUDENTS

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!



Is the stress of medical school getting to you? Believe it or not, **burnout** is a common mental health issue among medical students. From an endless cycle of exams to late nights during your clinical rotations, it is not surprising that many students struggle to stay motivated. This anxiety and concern is further compounded by the uncertainty of the **COVID-19** pandemic.

We hope this information will help elucidate the prevalence of medical student burnout, and reduce the stigma that surrounds this pressing mental health issue facing the next generation of physicians.



The prevalence of burnout and associated mental health issues among medical students today is staggering. According to the American Medical Student Association, by the time students reach residency:

- 60% meet the criteria for burnout
- 50% screen positive for depression
- 12% have probable major depressive disorder
- 9% admit to suicidal ideations

Further, despite the enormous success these students have attained, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports that medical students are **3 times** more likely to commit suicide compared to their aged-matched peers.

WHAT CAUSES BURNOUT?



" Many distressed students do not seek help because of stigma, personality traits, and other factors, which can limit the benefits of student support services."

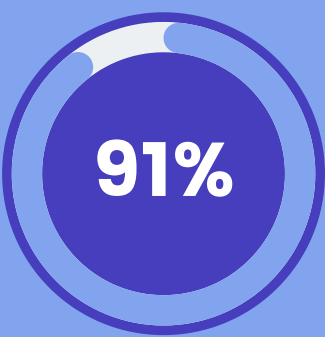
Chantal Brazeau, M.D., The Surest Way to Prevent Burnout in Medical School and Beyond. Academic Medicine, 2010.

Burnout is a complex issue, and every medical student will face their own unique stressors during his/her training. Nevertheless, the American Medical Student Association has compiled a list of common issues:

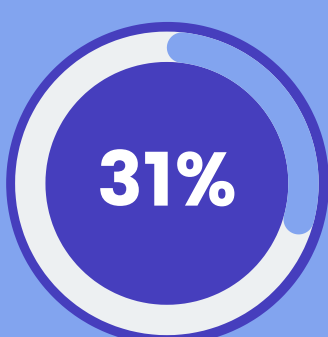
- **competitiveness and comparison to classmates**
- **minimizing social networks and activities**
- **decreasing contact with family and friends**
- **harmfully high pressure to perform well on board examinations**
- **exposure to death and illness**
- **financial difficulty (medical school isn't cheap)**
- **ethical conflict between personal morals and protected medical practices**
- **potential belittlement and berating at the hands of a preceptor.**

Without proper coping mechanisms, these stressors produce extreme anxiety and eventually burnout.

BURNOUT DURING THE PANDEMIC



91% of surveyed students reported stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic (1).



31% and 24% of students screened positive for anxiety and depression, respectively (2).



40% of students think COVID-19 interruptions and changes to their education will have at least a moderately negative effect on their ability to practice medicine as they launch their careers (3).

- 1) O'Byrne L, Gavin B, Adamis D, et al. Levels of stress in medical students due to COVID-19. Journal of Medical Ethics 2021;47:383-388.
- 2) Halperin SJ, Henderson MN, Prenner S, Grauer JN. Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Among Medical Students During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Cross-Sectional Study. Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development. January 2021.
- 3) Twachtman G, Kincaid E. Medical Student Life & Education Report 2020.

HOW TO MANAGE BURNOUT



Here are some helpful tips from the American Medical Association to keep in mind whenever medical school is becoming too stressful:

- **Manage physical health:** Medical students can have an active discussion with their own medical providers about diet, meditation, and exercise plans.
- **Maintain connectedness with peers:** Talk with your fellow students and build a support network. Be open about your physical/mental exhaustion or if you are experiencing burnout, as it is important to acknowledge the problem.
- **Learn about your support systems:** Many medical schools have developed programs that focus on ensuring students are taking care of themselves and are learning how to deal with the stress and pressure of becoming a physician.

Research for this infographic was performed at Wayne State University School of Medicine by Tala Al-Saghir, Deanna Harajli, Anneliese Rademacher, Abdullah Sahyouni, Matthew Trendowski, and Thomas Vander Woude.



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