

# Put the Brakes on Burnout

5 strategies to renew your passion for care



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## Introduction

Serving the healthcare needs of others is no walk in the park. Physicians, nurses, medical assistants, and other vital care team members are not invincible to the pressures that dictate their work environment. Many healthcare workers experience:

- Self-doubt
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Loss of motivation
- Cynical outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment

**This e-book focuses on strategies to help you minimize burnout and safeguard the health of your providers, staff, and your practice as a whole.**

# WHAT IS BURNOUT?

It doesn't take a textbook to know when someone suffers from emotional exhaustion. Sure, there are bad days when everything seems to go wrong. It's when the stress from multiple factors takes hold of providers and staff and steadily drains them of their motivation to perform tasks, or find value in critical functions of their profession.

Burnout is a long-term stress reaction marked by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lack of sense of personal accomplishment. Contributing factors include absence of control, complicated patients, EHR stress, packed schedules, fast-paced, emotionally-charged days, and intense pressures—all compounded by a lack of physical and emotional breaks, as well as a reduction in quality time spent with family, friends, and personal enrichment.<sup>1</sup>

## With change comes stress

The drive to improve the quality of care at a lower cost, meet patient expectations, comply with regulations, and maintain profitability fuels the engine of change among ambulatory practices.

Stress increases as providers and staff deal with health IT changes that involve tasks related to documentation, reimbursement, administration, and performance metrics, which too often create barriers to what providers want to do—take care of their patients.



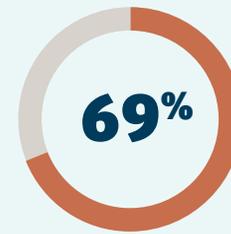
# BURNOUT PREVALENCE

**A survey conducted by *The Physicians Foundation*<sup>2</sup> collected feedback from 2,504 US physicians between May 26 and June 9, 2021.**

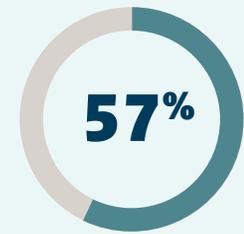
Thirty-six percent of physicians were in primary care, and the remaining 64% practiced in one of 27 specialties. The findings highlight burnout, which affects all aspects of healthcare.

- Sixty-nine percent of female physicians reported often feeling burned out, compared to 57% of male physicians.
- Employed physicians (64%) were more likely to report burnout than independent physicians (56%).
- Primary care physicians (66%) were more likely to experience burnout than specialists (59%).
- Fifty-seven percent of physicians reported inappropriate feelings of anger, tearfulness, or anxiety because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Fourteen percent of physicians said they sought medical attention for a mental health problem.
- Twenty percent of respondents said they know of a physician who has either considered, attempted, or died by suicide during the pandemic.
- Physicians identified confidential therapy and counseling (83%) and evidence-based professional training (78%) as the two most important strategies to address mental health conditions, burnout, and suicidal tendencies.<sup>3</sup>

Female physicians

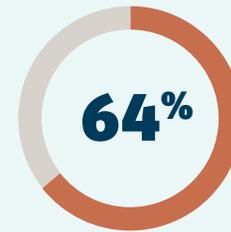


Male physicians

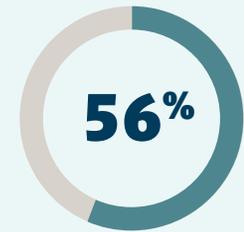


vs.

Employed physicians

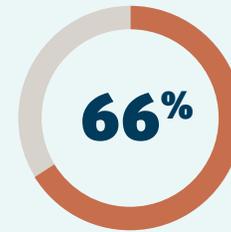


Independent physicians

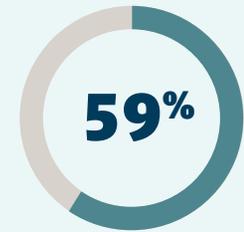


vs.

Primary care physicians



Specialists



vs.

# 61% of physicians reported experiencing burnout in 2021, up from 40% in 2018, according to *The Physicians Foundation*.

Age and relationship/parental status can also influence burnout risk:

- Physicians of younger age are at increased odds of burnout; those under 55 years old were at 200% increased risk compared with physicians 55 and older.
- Physicians with a child younger than 21 years old were at increased risk of burnout (54%).
- Physicians with a spouse/partner that works as a nonphysician provider were at increased risk of burnout (23%).<sup>4</sup>

## **Burnout attributed to bureaucracy affects all levels of ambulatory healthcare**

In a 2018 survey of 1,273 healthcare professionals from 154 small to medium-sized practices, burnout was experienced by 31.6% of the physicians, 17.2% of advanced practice clinicians, 18.9% of clinical support staff, and 17.5% of administrative staff.

Regardless of their roles, all healthcare professionals suffer from high anxiety. The study concluded that significant changes in care delivery and administrative processes contribute to workplace burnout, and it's essential to develop preventative strategies.<sup>5</sup>



Despite the demands expected of providers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, providers still blamed long hours mired in bureaucratic processes as the root cause of burnout.<sup>6</sup>

# 5 STRATEGIES TO RENEW YOUR PASSION FOR CARE

There is no cure-all to mitigate provider and staff burnout. However, much can be done. One strategy that stands out: **use technology and professional support services in new and innovative ways.**

When considered as part of an end-to-end solution with the goal of optimizing practice efficiency and minimizing routine tasks, the EHR can be your best friend.

## ① Introduce cloud-based technology

A cloud-based EHR means your practice does not have to manage any IT overhead, thus reducing unnecessary costs. A cloud-based platform also means you can access clinical data on any device with an internet connection. You can talk, type, or touch patient charting at the point of care, in-between patients, or even outside of the office setting.

Technology should be designed with time savings in mind and should ease the administrative burden on physicians.

**A tablet can now become a working extension of your practice, freeing clinicians from being chained to a desktop or laptop computer.**

## ② Integrate practice management software with your EHR

Excessive time spent on administrative tasks is one of the most significant contributors to provider burnout. This can be especially problematic in smaller practice settings with limited resources where administrative and compliance burdens typically land on clinical staff.

Inefficient billing and coding practices can cause a practice to lose revenue and add to the day-to-day frustration of the entire care team. One way to alleviate administrative burden is to implement technology that automates administrative functions, such as tasks related to revenue cycle management (RCM).

Time-consuming, repetitive tasks such as scheduling, verifying eligibility, and billing can all be automated to save your staff valuable time. With a practice management platform that's integrated into your EHR, you can simplify routine tasks, increase billing speed, keep your schedule full, and provide a better care experience.

What's more: an **RCM partner** that offers access to advanced health IT systems can help automate claims and billing, which can cut even more time spent on routine tasks and help ensure claims are billed at the contracted amount and more likely to get paid at first pass.

### 3 **Make life easier for your practice with patient portals**

Consumerism, patient expectations, and COVID-19 have reshaped how patients engage with medical practices. Technology solutions should support your practice and your patients. An online patient portal meets these demands safely, conveniently, and seamlessly. Such a solution should include a 24/7 accessible patient portal that allows patients to schedule appointments, pay bills, request medication refills, access their medical record and test results, and easily communicate with your practice.

For providers struggling with burnout, virtual visits make schedules more manageable. It gives providers the option of splitting their work hours between virtual and in-person consultations. For example, a provider can choose to dedicate specific hours or days of the week to virtual visits where they can see patients from the comfort of home, thereby reducing commuting time.

### 4 **Develop a culture of continuous improvement**

Commit to ongoing process optimization by paying attention to how your practice uses the EHR. Ensure the EHR supports the best possible workflows and evolves with you as your needs change. For process optimization to work, your team must be on an EHR platform that offers sufficient flexibility and allows for configuration.

EHR software is meant to semi-automate your chart notes using templates. Make sure the staff takes advantage of opportunities to automate routine documentation tasks. If the same note is being re-entered into the EHR a dozen times in a week, for example, modify a template to reduce repetitive data entry. If you need help modifying templates, seek support from a knowledgeable staff member, or your EHR vendor.



## 5 Foster a team approach to delivering care

Healthcare is a team sport. Delivering quality care requires bringing together many different skills. Like most professionals, physicians are generally happier if they work as part of a team. Utilizing each member of the care team, to the best of their ability, helps reduce burnout.

The EHR should be configured to support a culture of cooperation. Patient communication features such as online intake forms and pre-visit insurance verification, as well as checkout workflows that foster smooth transitions throughout the visit can result in a leaner, more efficient practice.

Incorporate a pre-visit planning meeting—or team huddle—into each day’s workflow. This helps ensure patient visits are efficient and promotes an environment of teamwork. The daily pre-visit planning meeting should prioritize workflow and empower clinical and support staff to do their part.

**Consider patients as part of the care team. By engaging in their care, they have greater accountability and commitment to your practice—factors that help reduce provider burnout.**



# NEXTGEN OFFICE—#1 BEST IN KLAS SMALL PRACTICE EMR/PM (1–10 PHYSICIANS)

**NextGen® Office** is an award-winning, cloud-based, clinical and billing solution designed for small, independent practices (≤ 10 providers). This all-in-one, turnkey solution includes specialty-specific EHR content, an easy-to-use patient portal, embedded virtual visits, a claims clearinghouse, and a MACRA/MIPS reporting dashboard. Out of the box, NextGen Office provides the right tools primary care physicians and their staff need at the point of care with no in-house IT overhead. What's more: the solution works on any device with an internet connection. Providers can touch, talk, or type encounter notes directly into the clinical documentation between patients or even outside the office, thus saving valuable time and harboring an atmosphere that promotes a better work-life balance.



**NextGen Office is an award-winning, cloud-based clinical and billing solution designed for small, independent practices (≤ 10 providers).**

# HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Contact us at 877-523-2120 or [ngosalesteam@nextgen.com](mailto:ngosalesteam@nextgen.com) to schedule a demo.

## BELIEVE IN BETTER.®

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