

NATIONAL CAPITAL
PHYSICIANS FOUNDATION
dedicatedtohealth.org

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**The vision of the
Physicians' Resource
Network is to encourage
and sustain a vibrant,
healthy and functional
medical community where
every physician is valued
and supported.**

The National Capital Physicians Foundation is dedicated to advancing the practice of medicine and population health in the National Capital area through education, research and innovation.

The National Capital Physicians Foundation & PRN (Physicians' Resource Network)... dedicated to YOUR health!

The National Capital Physicians Foundation is a 501(c)3 educational and charitable foundation initiated by Montgomery County (Maryland) Medical Society.

The organization's first initiative is dedicated to physician health and wellbeing. **Healthy Physicians = Healthy Communities.**

In a 2014 study conducted by Mayo Clinic & the AMA, 54.4% of physician respondents indicated they were exhibiting at least one symptom of burnout. In MCMS's 2016 Physician Practice Survey, 53.7% of physician respondents indicated they are experiencing moderate to high levels of burnout. 70 physicians indicated they would use a confidential, no cost physician counseling service if offered.

As a result, initial efforts of the National Capital Physicians Foundation are focused on development of **PRN, the Physicians' Resources Network**, which has initiated a Physician Well-being program, which includes confidential counseling. This program is modeled after the first program of its kind in the country developed by the Lane County (OR) Medical Society.

This service is now available to all physician members of MCMS, and to all other physicians who are practicing in Montgomery County. We anticipate broadening the availability of counseling services to additional physicians as funding is received.

The mission of PRN is to provide high quality counseling, coaching, education and resources that support physician well-being, resilience and growth.

What is PRN?

The Physicians' Resource Network, PRN, was established as a resource to physicians in the area to support their practice and personal needs, including psychological and physical well-being. The physician counseling program is the cornerstone of the PRN. In the future, additional services and activities, including educational initiatives, will be created to support physicians' professional satisfaction.

What are the essential elements of the physician well-being program?

- 1) Early intervention for a physician showing signs and symptoms of stress, burnout and depression offered through an online request via the NCPF website (www.dedicatedtohealth.org) or an email to PRN@dedicatedtohealth.org;
- 2) Counseling, offered through the Physician Well-being Program at no cost to the physician, to make behavioral, relational, and emotional changes to start to minimize the contributing factors to burnout;
- 3) Continued counseling and/or coaching on how to incorporate initial changes into one's ongoing professional and personal life offered through additional visits with the counselor or physician coach at the physician's expense; and
- 4) Referral to other appropriate vetted mental health resources as needed.

What is the PRN Physician Well-being Program?

The PRN Physician Well-being Program initiative is open to practicing physicians in Montgomery County who are seeking to address current practice and/or personal challenges through confidential counseling with psychological practitioners with the goal of achieving greater resilience and balance in their professional and personal lives.

Tenets of PRN's Physician Well-being Program:

- * Peer-developed and sanctioned
- * Physician-initiated counseling and coaching, no mandated referrals, no reports to third parties
- * 24/7 after-hours support line available
- * Confidential, not subject to discovery or attestation disclosure
- * Private reception area not shared with general public
- * Appointments are quickly and easily available
- * Program uses experienced psychologists, social workers and counselors interviewed and approved by the Medical Director of the PRN program and the NCPF board
- * Appointments available at physician-friendly times
- * Appointments are available away from hospitals and identifiable mental health establishments
- * Minimal paper record or private electronic record, separate from all health systems EMR
- * Not reportable to licensing board, under most circumstances
- * Established protocol for assisting impaired clients, acceptable to state license board
- * No cost sessions up to an established limit; additional sessions available at client's own cost
- * No insurance billed; no insurance record
- * Referrals made to other mental health resources as needed

Why are counseling services needed?

The practice of medicine is stressful. Stress is cumulative. Unresolved stress can lead to career dissatisfaction, addiction, illness, disruptive behavior, burnout and death. “Compassion fatigue” or burnout is a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. A 2011 & 2014 Mayo-AMA study shows burnout is increasing (54% of physicians reported suffering from at least one symptom of burnout).

Montgomery County (Maryland) Medical Society’s 2nd Annual Practice Survey in 2016 shows a similar result with 53.7% of respondents indicating they are suffering from moderate to severe burnout, and 70 physicians in our area indicated they would use counseling and coaching service if available

Burnout is driven by the nature of the work, physicians’ personal characteristics and training. Symptoms include:

- * Indifference and diminishment of concern for personal well-being
- * Neglect of self-care
- * Cynicism
- * Exhaustion
- * Coping by denial, avoidance and insecurity

Burnout can be aggravated by predisposing personality traits, and can lead to increased risk for medical errors and interpersonal conflicts. It is estimated that more than 400+ physicians commit suicide every year. By having an early intervention program in place, such as the PRN Physician Well-being Program, physician impairment and suicide may be avoided.

Why should hospitals and health systems support PRN’s Physician Counseling Program?

JCACHO accreditation mandates the medical staff “implement a process to identify and manage matters of individual health for licensed independent practitioners which is separate from actions taken for disciplinary purposes.”

Physician well-being:

- Enhances patient satisfaction (1/4 of Quad Aim)
- Reduces inappropriate prescribing and testing and enhances patient compliance
- Enhances workplace productivity efficiency, quality of patient care and patient safety
- Enhances recruitment and retention of physicians, especially in primary care
- Minimizes turnover and cost
- Prevents future physician impairment
- Reduces malpractice litigation
- Enhances the development of physician leaders who will guide other physicians into making the strategic and necessary changes in healthcare transformation.

Why should a hospital or health system support PRN if the institution already has an established relationship with an Employee Assistance Program or other behavioral health resource?

Due to concerns regarding confidentiality, physicians are more likely to use an independent third-party counseling service than one which has been arranged by an institution at which the physician has a relationship. Institutions will want to do what is in the best interests of physicians and patients by promoting the services offered through PRN.

Oversight & Governance of the PRN's Physician Well-being Program:

The National Capital Physicians' Foundation Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for oversight of all Physicians' Resource Network programs and services. Reporting to the NCPF Board of Directors, a Physician Well-being Advisory Committee composed of practicing physicians of several specialties and behavioral health practitioners was formed to develop policies, protocols, and strategies for the PRN. This committee is chaired by a psychiatrist who is also Medical Director of the PRN Physician Well-being Program.

Licensed Behavioral Health Professionals Provide Counseling Services

Under the direction of the Medical Director, licensed professional behavioral health practitioners, including psychologists and social workers, are contracted to provide counseling services to physicians within 48-72 hours after a request is made. Services are provided away from hospitals and identifiable mental health establishments. The Medical Director is available to discuss referrals protocols for physicians who have challenges beyond the scope of the counseling program.

Scope of Services Provided

Counseling services are intended to be an early intervention strategy for physicians suffering from stress and burnout to aid them in developing their own strategies to achieve greater resilience and balance in their professional and personal life. Appropriate referrals will be made for physicians who need additional services. *Note: This service is **not** for physicians in crisis.* Physicians in crisis will be referred to appropriate emergency services.

Payment for Counseling Services

The National Capital Physicians Foundation, through individual, organizational, and corporate donations and grants, provides resources necessary to fund counseling for physicians provided by contracted behavioral health professionals. The first three (3) counseling appointments are complimentary to the physician seeking to enhance their professional satisfaction by reducing causes of burnout. No insurance will be filed therefore maintaining confidentiality and further reducing the barriers to care. Physicians wishing additional appointments with behavioral health counselors will be responsible for payment. If a physician is referred to a psychiatrist, the physician will be responsible for payment.

Records Storage, Compliance & Data Collection

There is no medical record kept by the therapist. Services provided are not subject to discovery or attestation disclosure in most cases. Scope of counseling services provided under the Physicians' Resource Network are not reportable to the Maryland Board of Physicians. Individual therapists and the National Capital Physicians Foundation have liability insurance. Each physician is asked to complete a HIPAA privacy form and an informed consent for counseling. Therapists are held to a strict code of professional ethics and confidentiality. Usage data is collected from therapists, but is not individually identifiable. This data is used primarily for accounting and fundraising purposes.

How does a physician access the PRN Physician Well-being Program?

Physicians may access counseling services either through the NCPF's website: www.dedicatedtohealth.org or via email to PRN@dedicatedtohealth.org. Once the request is received, the physician will receive an initial contact within 24-36 hours. More information about PRN can be gained by calling PRN at 301.921.4300, ext. 300.