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The Toll of Burnout on Radiation Oncologist Well-Being

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For many, December marks a time of joy, with a packed calendar of gatherings and festive traditions. But with a long list of holiday plans and expectations, it can quickly shift to a month of high stress and its unwelcome partner, burnout.

Unfortunately, burnout is a well-known syndrome among physicians regardless of time of year and many of us have witnessed its depleting effects firsthand. Worse, repercussions such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization can undermine our most important goal—patient care.

Despite being widely documented among physicians, the prevalence of burnout among radiation oncologists is noticeably lacking in the literature. Yet, it is especially needed, particularly given the field's oncology-specific components. Helping to bridge this gap is the CME-approved article, *A Narrative Review on Radiation Oncology Physician Well-being in the United States*. This important article examines burnout in various career stages of the specialty, offering helpful strategies to battle this crippling problem.

Complementing the review is the article *Well-being Within a Radiation Oncology Department: A Single Institution's Experience in Creating a Culture of Well-being*, which chronicles a grassroots effort of the Mayo Clinic residency program that bloomed into a successful department-wide culture of reduced burnout. Backed by funding and strategic planning, they achieved this by mitigating pain points, building camaraderie, and implementing numerous ideas, from fitness challenges to revamped call schedules. We hope you find inspiration from this encouraging work.

This month's Resident Voice editorial, *Pennies to Policy: The Importance of Resident Financial Fluency*, discusses the related topic of financial education during residency and its potential role in reducing aspects of burnout during training and early career. This excellent column also describes how such efforts can promote empathy and advocacy for patients facing financial toxicity in a complicated health care system.

Further exploring clinician well-being is our recent blog, *Virtual Reality and Burnout Prevention: Turning Wellness for Health Care Workers Into a Reality*. This thoughtful write-up shares how a novel technology can reduce burnout, but only when backed by cultural change that embraces its use. Learn more at https://appliedradiationoncology.com/aro-blog (scroll down if needed).

We are also pleased to feature two research articles and a case report in the issue, which discuss insightful findings on the topics of total delivered dose variation in head and neck cancer treatment, prostate brachytherapy, and MR-guided therapy for hepatocellular carcinoma.

In other news, we are excited to welcome Mustafa Basree, DO, MS, as the new Association for Radiation Oncology Residents (ARRO) representative for *ARO*. Dr Basree is a PGY3 radiation oncology resident in the Department of Human Oncology, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, and serves as ARRO's junior chair of Education. In his role with *ARO*, Dr Basree will coordinate the Resident Voice editorial and assist with additional publishing endeavors to elevate resident voices and enhance their overall experience. He succeeds Amishi Bajaj, MD, a radiation oncologist at Northwestern Medicine, and past chair of ARRO, who was a great help to *ARO* and a true pleasure to work with over the last year.

As we move ahead to 2024, we thank you for another year of support and invite you to become involved in *ARO*'s many editorial opportunities, including article submissions, peer reviews, blogs, podcasts, webinars, and more.

We wish you a joyful (but not overbooked!) holiday season and a peaceful, fulfilling new year!

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