Fatigue and Burnout in the Healthcare Industry

The healthcare industry is facing its own internal pandemic daily, with no sign of a cure in sight. Everyday healthcare providers loose highly skilled professionals to fatigue and burnout. Studies done on physicians speculate that well over half of all practicing physicians experience at least one symptom of burnout, a startling revelation that many experts did not see coming.

The Many Faces of Fatigue

Fatigue manifests in many ways, in almost every facet of the healthcare profession. From surgeons to CNAs, large percentages of these groups report fatigue in more ways than one. Physical fatigue plagues tens of thousands in the healthcare world, with many people having to work 80 hours a week. This fatigue has been shown to impact decision making, performance in stressful situations, and the social lives of those that experience it. Physical fatigue is not alone however, emotional fatigue also finds it way easily into the bodies and minds of healthcare professionals every single day. Not only does emotional fatigue lead to various forms of depression, it can also lead to the loss of personal relationships and upset work-home balances that play a key role in mental fortitude.

The Truth Behind Burnout

Burnout can manifest in almost any profession, hobby, sport, or activity. When something is done too much for too long, burnout will creep in. In the healthcare world this is all too prevalent, with all spectrums of the healthcare workforce reporting burnout on levels never seen before. But what exactly does burnout look like? Burnout can manifest in

various ways, from physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach-aches to emotional symptoms such as sporadic crying and depression.4 All these factors can easily be found in any busy hospital or practice around the United States. As healthcare providers rush to save other's lives and find cures for new diseases, they are also fighting a war from within.

What's Causing This?

The dramatic increase in fatigue and burnout can be contributed to many factors. Of these, increased demand on healthcare providers to provide top tier care might be one of the leading causes. With a shortage of MDs, RNs, and PAs already hurting the healthcare industry in America, the call for higher quality care only puts more weight on the shoulders of already stressed professionals. This compounding stress is also not aided by the fact that more patients walk into clinic doors every day. With issues like heart disease, obesity, and high blood pressure being some of the leading causes of death in the United States, professionals begin to feel the overbearing pressure of treating these diseases every day all day.

What's Being Done?

Numerous providers are implementing systems to help combat the rise of fatigue and burnout. However, with the rise of COVID-19, healthcare workers are more stressed than they have ever been, with programs to help stress seemingly put on the back burner until the swell of cases dies down to a manageable number. No doubt fatigue and burnout will be the talk of the industry in the coming years.

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Hospitals in the Future will Change Within the United States

Thoughts of what our future will look and be like are always fun to entertain. We often drift off to ideas of flying cars, robot butlers, and what society will look like. Very seldom do we entertain the idea of what healthcare, and more specifically, hospitals will look like in the near future. As advances in medicine continue to be made and people continue to live longer, it may seem impossible to envision what the future has in store.

Less is More?

A major push in the healthcare industry is preventing the problem before it can become problem. Major medical providers have been pushing these ideas in order to lessen the load on the healthcare industry itself, which happens to already have an overladen workforce facing record amounts of burnout and fatigue. By promoting health programs that focus on healthy eating habits, proper mental health practices, and less substance abuse, providers are hoping a major impact can be made.1 More serious conditions that may not be preventable, such as cancer, can be given more time and effort in terms of research and treatment, rather than those resources going towards combating obesity.

Going Digital

Keeping patients who do not need to visit the hospital at home has become a major priority. Programs have been and continue to be developed to allow patients to connect with doctors in anyway besides face to face contact. Virtual meetings and teleconferences to discus symptoms have been implemented in communities all around the globe, with many of these programs reporting great success in their trial runs. Besides just discussions between patient and doctor, these platforms can offer easier ways of requesting prescription refill, referrals, records, and other goods and services that would typically be obtained in a physical clinic.

Electronic Medical Records

One of the best innovations in the healthcare field is that of the electronic medical record, and this improvement is only getting better every year. Transferable medical records via secure online portals has allowed for faster data transfer, leading to more positive patient outcomes and quicker treatment times. Instead of waiting for the physical record to show up at a hospital, records can be brought up in the blink of an eye if a patient is referred to a specialist or chooses to change primary care providers.3 This innovation may seem like a no brainer type situation, but the move from physical file records and fax machines is still an ongoing struggle within the medical community, with many holdouts still refusing to switch to any kind of electronic record system.

The Future is Now

All these innovations only make up a small portion of the major shift that is occurring in hospitals today. As sicknesses get worse and medicine continues to advance, it appears that the future is happening right in front of our eyes, with no sign of slowing down. The next 10 to 20 years

might hold more than the imagination can think of.

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How Has COVID-19 Changed Healthcare Industry

Unless you have been living under a rock for the past few months, you have most likely heard the term COVID-19. This new strain of flu has swept across the globe, forcing entire countries to quite literally close their doors to the outside world. Populations of hundreds of millions have been ordered to stay in their homes and wait out the storm. Everyday citizens all around the world watch as economies crash, people pass away, and leaders scramble to figure out response plans that help those in need. There is no doubt that the lives lived before this virus cannot be returned to, whether that change is large or small all depends on circumstance. Industries themselves are changing as well, with no industry changing more than that of healthcare. This should come as no shock, since healthcare providers all around the world have shouldered the weight of this pandemic, it is no surprise that they will change the most in the coming months and years.

HealthCare’s Response

Responses to these types of pandemics will no doubt change

dramatically. Whether you agree with your country's response or not, there is much to be learned from all of this. Vast amounts of data will be put under the microscope once COVID-19 has run its course, and much of this data will go on to influence entire nation's response protocols for the next potential pandemic.1 How supply chains are set up, or patient interactions occur, will all see change in the next few years. All of this will be done to minimize the risk of spreading a potential future virus, and if one were to spread, maximize the ability to combat it as quickly as possible.

Healthcare Professionals

Prior to COVID-19, professional burnout in the healthcare industry was at an all time high. Now, due to the massive stress induced by the pandemic, this statistic will only grow dramatically. With 1.2 million healthcare workers in the United States alone, considered a shortage of weeks by many experts, the fallout from the pandemic is expected to reduce that number dramatically over the course of the next one to three years.4 The perceived risk of being a healthcare worker does not help this situation either, with nurses and doctors dying from the very illness they are trying to combat. Prospective healthcare workers might now reconsider their choice and choose to pursue a career that they deem safer. This unhealthy cycle may very well continue to repeat for years to come, leading to more unneeded stress on the already encumbered global healthcare system.

What's in Store

The future of healthcare may seem uncertain right now, with quarantines being extended across the globe and people continuing to get sick. Imagining what the healthcare industry will look like one, two, or five years from now could lead anyone to a headache. However, there is no doubt that the healthcare industry will use this pandemic as a means to

improve itself inside and out and lead the world into a healthier tomorrow.

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Demand for Locum Staffing

As the health care industry continues to grow in the United States, so does the Locum Tenens industry. For those that may be unfamiliar, a locum tenens professional is a someone who works in place of the regular physician, nurse, or other designated position at a clinic, hospital, or practice. This role is not reserved only for MDs. RNs, PAs, and CRNAs are also in high demand when it comes to locum tenens staffing. Whether you are a provider looking to fill a position, or an individual healthcare professional looking to work somewhere else or find some extra work, this ever-growing industry will provide everything you need and more.

What is Causing This Demand?

This increased demand can be contributed to a variety of factors. There is already an existing shortage of medical professionals in the United States, with physicians and registered nurses making up a good portion of that number. Due in part to the increased demand on healthcare providers by the retiring Baby Boomer generation. With people living longer, healthcare demands increase, leading to the healthcare

industry requiring more out of their current workers. High turnover rate due to burnout is a major contributor to this shortage as well, healthcare providers are reporting some of the highest turnover rates in recent decades with no signs of slowing down. Many contribute this to increased patient load, long hours, poor work-home balance, and lack of control in their own practice.2 As professionals leave their practice, gaps that are left in medical teams need to be filled. 1

Who Benefits from This Demand?

Fortunately, the demand for locum tenens professional offers a wide variety of opportunities for many different groups. Newcomers to the medical field fresh out of college and residency stand to gain the most from this high demand. By acting as a place holder in any clinic, hospital, or practice, these newly minted professionals can gain much needed experience in order to propel themselves into a more long-term situation. For medical professionals who might want to take a step back from practicing, yet still be involved here and there, locum tenens is a great path to choose. This allows for more flexibility in working hours, less responsibilities when it comes to the everyday tasks that a full-time worker would have to deal with, and more downtime to recuperate from potentially challenging or draining days.4

How Can These Vacancies be Found?

Thankfully, as an already busy medical professional, you won’t have to go far to find openings that need to be filled in the industry. As I stated, shortages in the healthcare industry have led to large demand for these types of positions. A great place to start is online. Websites such as Locumcare are full of these types of job listings.3 If for some reason you have issues finding open positions on these types of platforms, contacting peers within the medical community about opportunities for locum tenens work is another great way to

find yourself in a new position quickly.

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Healthcare Recruiting

It is no secret that the healthcare field is growing at an exponential rate. With most of the Baby Boomer generation in or nearing retirement, the demand for healthcare professionals continues to rise. This demand has led to a struggle between healthcare providers over who gets these up and coming professionals.4 If you are reading this article, there is a good chance you might be in the same boat as many other recruiters in your field and find that you are struggling to find that missing piece of your medical team.

Rethink Your Recruiting

Recruiting medical professionals isn’t as simple as it once was. With multiple websites, platforms, and apps for young medical professionals to use, it can be hard to decide where to focus your recruiting efforts. Let’s start at one of the most basic, yet effective, methods of recruitment. The college campus. Many soon to be college graduates around the world typically have one thought on their mind, where will I land a job. As a recruiter, your job is to make a connection with these future MD’s and RN’s, and there is no better place to make that first impression than in person, right on campus.

Start with researching credible universities with great nursing or medical programs. Identify which ones offer career fairs, outreach days, and similar activities where prospective employers can make connections. Use these opportunities as ways of attracting young talent and funneling them into your company. Building a reputation of outreach will only help you in the long run as you continue to search for that perfect candidate.3

Streamline Your Online Application

Something important to consider is the fact that for many graduates, there are options. This means that a large amount of potential candidates might not even give your job listing the time of day if it seems like the application process might take way too long. Streamlining your application process will make life easier for you, and attract a larger number of candidates that might be right for the job. If you have not already, make sure that your entire application process can be completed online. After that, cut out any unneeded information that can be handled later or during the in-person interview phase of hiring. Make sure the application process is easy to follow, read, and complete. Nothing will turn a great candidate away faster than a poorly designed and hard to follow application.1

Utilize Pre-Existing Platforms

Some great tools to add to your recruiting kit are healthcare focused recruiting websites. One such website is Locum Care, a website that offers young medical professionals' great opportunities to see what kind of demand is out there, and hosts job listings for those seeking employment. Websites like Locum Care should be utilized to their fullest extent, if you are hoping to attract qualified applicants.2 Since Locum Care is for contract, temp to perm, and permanent positions, being active on this type of platform will draw in a large number of

candidates and will allow you to pick and choose whomever you think is right for the job.

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