

TITLE:

Medical Student Wellness, Stress, and Burnout

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RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Concern over medical student stress and burnout has sparked research demonstrating higher prevalence of psychological distress among medical students than their age-matched peers. Some students have a history of psychiatric illness upon entering medical school; whereas, others develop psychiatric illness during school. The consequences of medical student psychiatric distress include lowered academic performance, academic dishonesty, decreased empathy, increased substance abuse, and suicide. Many medical schools have responded to concern over medical student wellness by implementing wellness programs at their institutions. However, barriers exist that decrease medical student utilization of these programs and other resources, including concern regarding the impact of disclosure of their help-seeking behavior on their future career and choice of residency programs. Fellow students are often unaware of other student's problems, and those that are aware are often reluctant to disclose information about their colleagues. Program constraints, such as time demands, are also identified as barriers to wellness among medical students. In my lab, we focus on the well-being of healthcare professionals and trainees (students and residents). Various studies are ongoing related to this topic. After consultation with the faculty mentor, the MSRP student will identify a dataset and research question (or questions) of interest to explore during the fellowship period. The MSRP student will assist with literature review, data analysis, and preparation of presentations and manuscripts. Funding for the research has been provided by the Professionals Resource Network, an integral arm of the Florida Medical Association.

Representative Publications:

Merlo, L.J., Trejo-Lopez, J., Conwell, L., & Rivenbark, J. (2013). Patterns of substance use initiation among healthcare professionals in recovery. *American Journal on Addictions, 22*, 605-12. PMID: 24131169

Cottler, L.B., Ajinkya, S., Merlo, L.J., Nixon, S.J., Ben Abdallah, A., & Gold, M.S. (2013). Lifetime psychiatric and substance use disorders among impaired physicians in a physician health program: Comparison to the general population. *Journal of Addiction Medicine, 7*, 108-112. PMID: 23412081

Merlo, L.J., Singhakant, S., Cummings, S.M., & Cottler, L.B. (2013). Reasons for misuse of prescription medication among physicians undergoing monitoring by a physician health program. *Journal of Addiction Medicine, 7*, 349-53. PMID: 24089039