IOMSC: Declaration and Statement of Principles
on Health Care Professionals' Health and Well-being

The International Occupational Medicine Society Collaborative (IOMSC) promotes occupational health across the globe to create healthy working environments and promote employees' health and well-being. This Statement of Principles and Declaration aims to drive improvements in health care professionals' health and well-being at work which also results in enabling the provision of high-quality and safe health care for patients.

We ask all IOMSC member organizations to sign this Declaration to show their commitment to improving health care professionals' health, safety and well-being at work. We have launched the campaign because IOMSC member societies acknowledge the unacceptably high international statistics for workplace stress and burnout in health care professionals. This also confirms that occupational medicine physicians should provide medical surveillance for the well-being and mental health of all health care professionals. We recognize the significant adverse impacts on patient safety and the wider community that we serve. The IOMSC advocates for the implementation of effective preventive strategies.

Background

IOMSC fully supports health care work environments that reduce burnout and protect employees' health. Given the stressful nature of the clinical environment, it is important to recognize the occupational hazards that may arise. One major effect of workplace stress is burnout, which is a common occupational hazard for health care staff.[2] It is defined as "a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion that results in depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishment at work".[3] Burnout can have a severe effect on health care professionals' health and consequently, burnout can lead to adverse health outcomes and patient safety concerns.[4] In one meta-analysis, physician burnout was associated with increased risk of adverse safety events and poorer quality of care.[5] In an additional study, physician burnout was associated with a two-fold increase in the likelihood of unsafe care being delivered.[6] Physician burnout and affected mental well-being from the workplace can have extreme personal health effects. In one Medscape study, 15% of physicians interviewed had thoughts of suicide and/or attempted suicide. Furthermore, physicians have the highest suicide rate of all professions in the United States.[7]

Supportive and open workplaces benefit both health care professionals and service users.[8] People perform better when they are confident and motivated and good health, safety and well-being underpins this. By positively supporting employees' health, safety and well-being, employers can ensure that staff perform to the best of their ability. The strong relationship between levels of staff well-being and clinical outcomes is well documented. Research shows that when staff well-being is supported, employee involvement increases, motivation and performance levels increase.

References

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Health Care Professionals' Health and Well-being
Statement of Principles and Values

The International Occupational Medicine Society Collaborative (IOMSC) advocates for the health and well-being of all health care professionals. We seek to improve health care systems in order to create better health and safety outcomes for patients. Members of the IOMSC can contribute effective solutions to the identification, reduction and/or elimination of hazards associated with the provision of health care. We acknowledge the adverse impacts of workplace risks on the physical and mental health and well-being of health care professionals and the secondary adverse effects on their patients, families, colleagues and the community.

The IOMSC:
- Aims to protect and enhance the health and well-being of all health care professionals, leading to better health and safety outcomes for patients.
- Acknowledges that health care systems, roles and responsibilities can create risks to the physical and mental health and well-being of health care professionals.
- Recognizes that health care professionals, health care leaders, hospitals, medical educators and governments have responsibilities both to the health and well-being of patients and to those working in health care.
- Recognizes that health care professionals should be encouraged and enabled to maintain their health and well-being, and to have access to occupational health services.

- Confirms that occupational medicine physicians should apply their knowledge to the anticipation, identification, reduction and/or elimination of risks in health care systems.
- Advocates for the development of improved models of health care delivery which incorporate the principles and health benefits of a safe and healthy workforce.
- Advocates for the adoption of a broad range of strategies to improve workplace well-being, including improvements in health leadership, funding, governance, education and research.

IOMSC: Declaration on Health Care Professionals' Health and Well-being

The IOMSC calls for actions from leaders with responsibilities for health care professionals to:

1. Ensure that the resources and skill mix required for safe, healthy patient care are assessed and addressed.
2. Ensure that occupational health and safety and employment standards legislation are complied with, as this is crucial for overall health and safety at work, including mental health and safety.
3. Ensure that working hour requirements are adhered to as required by accrediting bodies and the law. More specifically,
   a. Working hours, rosters, shifts and rest breaks should be reasonable and appropriate for all health care professionals, including residents and trainees, in order to ensure the health and safety of health care providers and their patients.
   b. No doctor is expected, bullied into, or required to falsify hours worked.
   c. Further research and advocacy are conducted to maintain humane working hours for clinical staff.
4. Ensure that health care professionals are involved in the design of, and have access to, flexible working arrangements including a variety of shifts to promote a positive workplace culture around working time, including taking leave and breaks.
5. Foster a positive working environment with zero tolerance of bullying behaviors by and towards health care professionals and trainees.
6. Provide access to occupational health services and other organizational resources to improve mental and physical health, safety and well-being.
7. Nurture a compassionate and supportive workplace culture.
8. To as much of an extent as possible, use existing standards and guidelines (e.g., the Canadian Standard Association's National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace CSA-Z1003-13[1]) as frameworks for the adoption of psychological health and safety principles at work.

With the above action items prioritized, health care professionals will face reduced workplace stress, improved mental well-being, and higher morale in the workplace. The IOMSC additionally has developed the above "Statement of Principles and Values" which recognize the increased mental health risks for healthcare professionals and promotes programs that enhance health care professionals' well-being.