Acting on What we Already Know:
Supporting Resiliency Among Resident Physicians in Canada

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Introduction

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Disclosure statement

- I have no actual or potential conflicts of interest to disclose in relation to this presentation.
Background
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- Residents want to talk about **systemic** barriers to care - beyond strengthening individual resiliency
- RDoC set out to explore major themes relating to:
  - Resident wellness
  - Burnout
  - Barriers to care
  - Potential solutions
Methods
Methods

- Qualitative study with three focus groups
  - Total of 14 resident participants
  - Two focus groups took place in Calgary with RDoC’s newly-trained resiliency peer trainers
  - One focus group completed via teleconference with RDoC Board members

- Semi-structured interviews with 6 questions
- Data was analyzed using thematic analysis
Methods

- Compared data to RDoC’s 2018 National Resident Survey
  - 70 questions based on 3 comprehensive dimensions: residency training, wellness, and medical practice
  - Administered in April 2018
  - Completed by 833 residents (response rate 8.3%)
  - Responses were weighted to reflect population characteristics of RDoC membership
Results
Results - 2018 National Resident Survey

51.9%

of Canadian residents self-screened positive for burnout

N=8,725 (weighted)
Results - Focus Groups

Themes on burnout:
- Lack of empathy
- Extreme sense of responsibility
- Sacrifice
- Lack of balance

Supporting quotes:
- “We all went into medicine because we want to help people [...] and when we’ve lost that part of us, such a big part of our identity, I think that’s a huge red flag. Something really bad is going on.”
- “In this field if our work is not up to par... people die.”
- “There’s this idea of self-sacrifice and the more you’re willing to give up yourself [...] the better physician you are.”
Self-Assessment of Work/Life Balance:
“My work schedule leaves me enough time for my personal/family life.”

- Strongly agree: 17%
- Somewhat agree: 29%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 30%
- Disagree: 19%
- Strongly disagree: 5%

N=8,778 (weighted)
Results - Focus Groups

Themes on barriers to wellness:
- Stigma, expectations and the hidden curriculum
- Fear of repercussions
- Lack of available resources and role models

Supporting quotes:
- “Stigma around putting yourself first, around [seeking help for] mental health in the healthcare profession, and [not knowing] what resources exist or how to access them.”
- “When you think about job opportunities and not wanting to show you're weak by asking for time off.”
- “Trying to balance service vs. educational needs vs. being a human and a person.”
Results - 2018 National Resident Survey

Which of the following is the most significant barrier to seeking mental health care?

59.4%  Lack of control over your own schedule

24.9%  Culture of medicine (e.g. stigma, perception that seeking help reflects weakness)

7.0%  Unavailability of resources that ensure confidentiality

N=8,607 (weighted)
Results - Focus Groups

Themes around building solutions:
- More confidential, accessible resources
- Wellness champions
- Culture change

Supporting quotes:
- “Having a third party who residents can approach [...] that will protect their confidentiality and their privacy with either their concerns for jobs in the future or for competitive subspecialties in the future.”
- “Just as we have preceptors who are teaching us to be good clinicians, we should also have preceptors who are champions of [being well].”
- “Creating an environment where wellness is pointed out, celebrated and people feel like they can be advocates for themselves.”
Conclusion
Conclusion

Final quotes from focus group participants:

“I think there’s a general feeling that the profession of medicine will not be able to continue the way it is. It’s unsustainable [...] and I think patients are losing trust in the medical system.”

“Resident burnout is being talked about more and more. It’s on people’s minds, I think people recognize it and see that it’s important.”

“It’s a little bit alarming because we have some staff at our university that will address it openly in evaluations and say, I wish you looked like you were still enjoying yourself.”
Conclusion

Wellness Initiatives

System-level Change