



# 2015 Physician Stress & Burnout Survey

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Physician stress and burnout is prevalent and increasing.

Some would say it has grown to the point of epidemic, even a threat to public health. Based on continued concern for physicians and witnessing the most significant changes in healthcare’s history, we measured physician stress and burnout. There is an urgent need for healthcare organizations to recognize and address this crisis; initiatives are needed for physicians to feel understood and supported by their leadership and to develop greater well being.

### More needs to be done — and soon.

Physicians are a precious resource and they are suffering. To make matters worse, when physicians suffer, the downstream effects on patient safety and satisfaction, risk management, staff retention and recruiting are immense.

We asked the national physician population the same questions as in our 2011 study, so we could compare progress on this critical issue. The results revealed the progress, prevalence and effects of physician stress and burnout. Our goal was to not only understand the nature of the issue, but also to learn whether or not organizations have been successful in providing solutions to correct the problem.

*“I wish I could practice what I preach to patients. There’s no time to focus on myself.”*



The results are alarming. The situation is significantly worse.

At the same time, the baby-boomer generation is retiring, physicians are leaving the profession at increasing rates and millennials are questioning the benefits of entering the profession – all at a time when highly educated technical labor is predicted to shrink. This can seem nearly insurmountable to healthcare organizations also facing operational and technical pressures, increasing expenses and with limited experience in building sustainable, healthy work environments.

## CAUSES OF STRESS

2015 Study of 2,005 Physicians



48%  
healthcare reform



43%  
paperwork and administrative demands



57%  
concerns about work/life balance

Every day physicians present behavioral and performance issues, suffer from depression, lack engagement or deal with problems in their personal lives. Help is available from experts who understand the challenges facing physicians and their families, healthcare teams, departments and entire organizations, to address the causes and effects of stress and burnout.

*“The stress of my previous job completely overshadows the stress of moving. It was unbearable and hurting both my husband and me physically. My new position isn’t perfect, but leaving has saved us physically. Leaving one place empowers you to set limits at another.”*

Healthier and happier physicians are critical in helping healthcare organizations to meet the challenges ahead. These survey results will help your organization better understand and address stress and burnout in your physician population. We stand ready to help you develop the right solutions to both prevent and ameliorate stress and burnout, so your organization can, in turn, be healthy and achieve your goals.

## Stress and Burnout Increasing

The 2015 study of 2,005 physicians clearly showed not only is it prevalent, but stress and burnout is increasing. Almost 66% of the over 2000 respondents indicated more stress and burnout than in the 2011 study. 88% of all respondents identified themselves as moderately to severely stressed and 46% specified severe stress and burnout.

**88%** moderately to severely stressed



**46%** severely stressed



## Causes of Stress and Burnout

There are a myriad of stressors, but what is causing the most stress and burnout in respondents' lives? Can stressors be identified on a more granular level with the goal of creating assistance solutions for the individual or organizations? The leading stressors identified in the three areas we measured are:

- Personal – Concerns about work/life balance 57%
- External – Healthcare reform 48%
- Work – Paperwork and administrative demands 43%

## Effects of Stress and Burnout

But does this really matter? Yes, the impact on physicians' lives is significant, both in work related and personal life related areas. Only 8% of respondents reported no work related impacts due to stress and burnout.

### Top work/life impacts:

- Lower job satisfaction 49%
- Desire to work fewer hours 42%
- Desire to retire early 31%
- Desire to leave the practice of medicine 29%
- Desire to switch jobs 18%

### Top personal life impacts:

- General feelings of tiredness 44%
- General feelings of irritability 33%
- General feelings of apathy or cynicism 29%
- Less sleep or problems sleeping 28%
- Impact on physical health 25%
- Impact on mental health 20%

*"I feel a great many physicians are experiencing burnout. Unless some action is taken, we will end up with a national physician shortage."*

## Dealing with Stress and Burnout

Are organizations helping? When asked if their organizations did anything to help them deal more effectively with stress and burnout only 18.5% said yes. 52.2% said there were wellness initiatives, but it was difficult to find time to use them. The top preferences for assistance were:

- More time off or self-directed time 62%
- More ancillary support, such as aides to deal with paperwork and charting 61%
- Better understanding of the challenges and support by administration 47%



**18%**

feel their organization effectively helps deal with stress & burnout



**52%**

difficult finding time to use programs

## We can help

VITAL WorkLife, Inc.™ is a national behavioral health consulting organization providing support to people facing life's challenges, while also assisting organizations in improving workplace productivity. We have deep experience in healthcare, especially assisting physicians and providers in dealing with the challenges facing their profession.

*"The 'Walmartization' of healthcare in America, pushed by Medicare, is a truly depressing trend in primary care. I can no longer participate in this process. I give up. I'm retiring."*

*Quotes based on verbatim comments from 2015 survey respondents.*



For a list of resources and a complete copy of the 2015 Stress & Burnout Survey, visit our website at <http://VITALWorkLife.com/forPhysicians/Stress-Burnout>