

Title: Fatigue Mitigation and Physician Well-being Policy

References: ACGME Institutional and Common Program Requirements

I. Purpose

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Medicine (SOM) is committed to ensuring resident wellbeing, patient safety and an optimal learning environment by promoting strategies to manage fatigue, stress and burnout. This policy provides guidance to residents and faculty on fostering a culture of wellness, resilience and fitness for duty.

II. Definitions

- A. Fatigue mitigation: Recognizing and managing fatigue to maintain safety in patient care and optimal learning by utilizing various methods and strategies.
- B. Fitness for duty: Mentally and physically able to effectively perform required duties.
- C. Scheduled duty periods: Assigned duty within the institution encompassing hours, which may be within the normal workday, beyond the normal workday, or a combination of both.
- D. Well-being: A state of mental, emotional, and physical health, enabling high-quality patient care and personal resilience.
- E. Burnout: Emotional exhaustion, and a sense of diminished interest in work and accomplishment. Components of burnout may include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of lack of competence or success in one's work. Burnout may lead to depression, anxiety, substance abuse disorders and other mental health conditions.
- F. Resilience: The capacity to recover and adapt to challenges encountered during training.

III. Policy

- A. Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities: UTRGV GME will provide oversight and support programs in the following ways (IR: 3.2.g.):
 - 1. Educating faculty members and residents/fellows in identification of the symptoms of burnout, depression, and substance abuse, including means to assist those who experience these conditions. This includes educating residents/fellows and faculty members in how to recognize those symptoms in themselves and how to seek appropriate care. (IR: 3.2.g.1.)
 - 2. Providing access to confidential, affordable mental health assessment, counseling, and treatment, including access to urgent and emergent care 24 hours a day, seven days

- a week. (CPR: 6.13.e, IR: 3.2.g.4.)
 3. Encouraging reporting of unprofessional behavior or well-being concerns in a safe, respectful manner by residents and faculty members including the Program Director, DIO or other designated personnel when there are any concerns related to well-being. (IR: 3.2.g.2)
 4. Providing access to appropriate self-screening tools. (IR: 3.2.g.3)
 5. Put measures in place to ensure compliance and appropriate reporting of clinical work hours as appropriate for each specialty, to promote well-being and prevent burn out. (IR: 3.2.e.)
- B. Program Responsibilities: UTRGV Programs, in partnership with the Sponsoring Institution, are responsible for:
1. Education and Awareness: programs are responsible for providing appropriate and specific training to residents and faculty to identify signs of fatigue, burnout, and mental health issues. They must also provide education on fatigue mitigation strategies such as strategic napping, time management, and maintaining a healthy routine. (CPR: 6.13.d.1.)
 2. Continuity of Care: programs must ensure there is continuity of patient care with back-up plans, consistent with program's policies when a resident is unable to perform their duties due to fatigue or illness. (CPR: 6.14.a.)
 3. Monitoring: programs must evaluate the impact of schedules and workload on resident and faculty well-being and patient safety through surveys and reviews. (CPR: 6.13.) Fatigue mitigation strategies and compliance with ACGME duty-hour standards must also be appropriately documented. (CPR: 6.13.)
 4. Resources and Access: programs must maintain safe sleep facilities, access to food, 24/7 mental health services, lactation support and transportation options for residents too fatigued to drive home. (IR: 3.2.g.5., CPR: 6.16., CPR: 6.13.e.) Programs must ensure that residents are able to attend their medical, mental health and dental care appointments even if those are scheduled within working hours. (CPR: 6.13.c.1.)
- C. Resident Responsibilities: Learning self-care is an important component of professionalism and it is very important to be able to give the best care possible to our patients. Thus, trainees have a responsibility to themselves and to their patients and programs to ensure that they are fit for work. These responsibility to themselves may include:
1. Prioritize self-care by ensuring adequate rest, healthy routines and regular mental health check-ins as deemed appropriate.
 2. Identifying appropriate resources as appropriate that are available through UTRGV Employee Assistance Program (UTEAP) and other resources on the UTRGV GME website that should be proactively utilized to practice self-care, to enhance wellness, and/or to seek help to improve mental wellness.
 3. Impairment recognition and notification, either from illness, fatigue, or substance use in themselves, their peers, and other members of the health care team.
 4. Reporting their duty hours in the work and learning environment to give programs feedback on schedule intensity.
 5. Trainees should be able to utilize various mitigation strategies as needed and as appropriate

including; strategic napping, judicious use of caffeine, availability of other caregivers, time management to maximize sleep off-duty, learning to recognize the signs of fatigue, self-monitoring performance and/or asking others to monitor performance, remaining active to promote alertness, maintaining a healthy diet, using relaxation techniques to fall asleep, maintaining a consistent sleep routine, exercising regularly, increasing sleep time before and after call, and ensuring sufficient sleep recovery periods.