

**Title:** Resident and Fellow Wellness

**Reference(s):** [ACGME Common Program Requirements](#) (focused revision effective July 1, 2020), [ACGME Institutional Requirements](#) (July 1, 2018)

## I. Purpose

- A. Residents, fellows, and faculty members are at an increased risk for burnout and depression. Psychological, emotional, and physical well-being are critical in the development of the competent, caring and resilient physician. Self-care is an important component, of professionalism and is a necessary tool in the delivery of high-quality patient care. These skills must be learned and nurtured in the context of the many roles that residents, fellows, and faculty must play as a result of their profession both at work and at home. This policy outlines the terms used in discussing physician wellness and the responsibilities of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Medicine (SOM) Graduate Medical Education (GME) Office, the UTRGV graduate medical education programs, and the learners themselves to address resident and fellow physician wellness.

## II. Definitions

- A. **Burnout:** Long-term exhaustion and diminished interest in work. Components of burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of lack of competence or success in one's work. Burnout can lead to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse disorders.
- B. **Learner:** Any physician-in-training in a graduate medical education program, including residents and fellows.
- C. **Resilience:** The ability to withstand and recover quickly from difficult conditions or situations. During training, learners may face difficulty with patient care, education, or personal events, which have the ability to negatively affect their well-being. One of the goals of wellness training and learning about self-care is to develop resilience in the face of these challenges.
- D. **Well-being:** Refers to the state of being healthy, happy, and successful. Well-being may be positively increased by interacting with patients and colleagues at work, being intellectually stimulated, and by feeling that one is making a difference and helping others. Additional self-care activities include exercise, getting plenty of rest, and connecting with others.

- E. Fatigue mitigation: Methods and strategies for learning to recognize and manage fatigue to support physician/caregiver well-being and safe patient care.

### III. Policy

#### Graduate Medical Education Support

- Assist program directors (PDs) in their initiatives to protecting time with patients, minimizing non-physician obligations, providing administrative support, promoting progressive autonomy and flexibility, and enhancing professional relationships.
- Provide PDs with resources to educate faculty and learners about the symptoms of burnout, depression, and substance use and their avoidance.
- Encourage learners and faculty members to alert their program director, designated institutional official (DIO), or other designated personnel when they are concerned about another learner or faculty member who is displaying signs of burnout, depression, substance use, suicidal ideation or potential for violence.
- Provide access to confidential, affordable mental health assessment including access to care 24 hours a day, either in person or remotely.
- Provide a way for learners to report unprofessional behavior and a respectful process for reporting, investigating, and addressing such concerns.
- Provide resources for learners to self-assess whether they meet validated criteria for burnout, depression, or other conditions and maintain resources on the UTRGV GME website.

#### Program Responsibilities

In addition to working with the institution on the initiatives described above, individual programs are responsible for:

- Awareness of scheduling, work intensity, and work compression that may impact resident well-being.
- Evaluating workplace safety data and addressing the safety of residents and faculty.

Allowing learners the opportunity to attend medical, dental, and mental health care appointments. Learners must follow their program's procedures for notification of these appointments and scheduling the time away.

- Educating learners and faculty about symptoms and signs of burnout, depression, and substance use, and how to seek care.
- Educating all faculty members and learners to recognize the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation.
- Educating all faculty members and learners in alertness management and fatigue mitigation process.

- Educating learners to use fatigue mitigation processes to manage the potential negative effects of fatigue on patient care and learning.
- Ensuring that programs have sufficient back-up plans in order to provide patient care in the event that a learner is unable to perform their patient care responsibilities, without fear of negative consequences.
- Promoting and supporting a training culture where learner wellness is prioritized commensurate with ACGME Common Program Requirements.

### **Resident and Fellow Responsibilities**

Learning self-care is an important component of professionalism and patient care and trainees have a responsibility to themselves and to their patients and programs to ensure that they are fit for work through behaviors such as:

- Acknowledging that each learner has resources through the 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.
- Devoting sufficient time to resting outside of work so as to be prepared for professional duties/responsibilities.
- Impairment recognition and notification, either from illness, fatigue, or substance use in themselves, their peers, and other members of the health care team.
- Reporting honestly their duty hours in the work and learning environment to give programs feedback on schedule intensity.

For further information and resources, please review the UTRGV GME Well-being website:  
<https://www.utrgv.edu/som/gme/resident-wellness-resources/index.htm>