

MSSC NEWS

Pandemic takes a toll on physician mental health



Stress, depression and exhaustion from the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on family medicine physicians in Kansas, a new study found.

More than half of family doctors surveyed last year – 50.4% – reported at least one sign of burnout, experienced emotional exhaustion or felt a higher level of personal stress, especially those who treated confirmed or presumed-positive COVID-19 patients.

“This is very serious,” said lead author Samuel Ofei-Dodoo, PhD, MPH, CPH, an assistant professor and researcher at University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita in the Department of Family and Community Medicine. Ofei-Dodoo, along



OFEI-DODOO

with fellow researchers Colleen Loo-Gross, MD, MPH, and Rick Kellerman, MD, published their findings in the May-June 2021 edition of the Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine.

Physicians who treated confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 patients were four times more likely to report at least one manifestation of professional burnout and three times more likely to experience emotional exhaustion than those who did not treat COVID-19 patients, Ofei-Dodoo said.

“Family physicians were on the front lines of the pandemic,” he said. “During COVID last year, things became very, very stressful, very fast. We know people are leaving the medical profession. They are taking early retirement – they want to quit because they are burning out. It is important for us to tackle this head on.”

Before the pandemic, KUSM-W researchers had already found that nearly half of Wichita-area physicians were experiencing signs of burnout, which is associated with symptoms of depression, fatigue, suicidal ideation and intentions to leave the medical profession via early retirement or career change. That study, published in May 2019,

PLEASE SEE **BURNOUT**, PAGE 2

New DO school poised to open soon

The Kansas Health Science Center – Kansas College of Osteopathic Medicine is on track to host its first class of DO candidates in 2022.

Construction is nearly done on the \$75 million redevelopment project of five downtown buildings along Douglas and William streets, which is anticipated to be finished and ready for occupancy by December or earlier, said Joel Dickerman, DO, KHSC dean and chief academic officer.

Dickerman and KHSC President Tiffany Masson, Psy.D., provided updates to the MSSC board of directors on June 30, describing the school's planned curriculum, community-based education methods and plans to address residency challenges while bringing more doctors to rural areas in Kansas.

Nationally, Kansas ranks 40th in physicians per capita, underscoring a shortage of physicians that is expected to climb to as many as 50,000 to 120,000 by 2032, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

In addition, 30% of Kansas physicians are nearing retirement, which was exacerbated by COVID-19, creating an opportunity for the DO school to complement the already robust and well-respected University of Kansas School of

PLEASE SEE **KHSC**, PAGE 3

SAVE THE DATE

► **Sept. 14** – MSSC membership meeting at Wichita State University with new WSU President Richard Muma, and also new Kansas Health Foundation President and CEO Teresa Miller.



JULY
2021

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COVID-19 added to pressures that physicians face



Stephen J. Grindel, DO
July President's Message

Many physicians struggled with stress and burnout before COVID-19. A 2019 survey of MSSC members by the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita found that nearly half of Wichita-area physicians experienced signs of burnout. But COVID-19 placed additional pressures on physicians, as reflected in a new KUSM-W survey.

Rick Kellerman, MD, Colleen Loo-Gross, MD, and Samuel Ofei-Dodoo, PhD, at KUSM-W surveyed family physicians in Kansas in May and June 2020. The study results were published recently in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*.

The study showed burnout was higher in physicians caring for presumed or confirmed COVID cases than in physicians not treating COVID patients (63% of respondents vs. 30%). Emotional exhaustion was three times more likely in physicians treating patients with presumed or confirmed COVID-19. The study also noted concerns with patient volume loss and family exposure to the virus.

Though stress was greater on those working directly with COVID-19 patients, other physicians also faced strains from the pandemic, including financial pressures caused by canceled procedures and appointments. A national survey found that 80% of primary care physicians reported at least one manifestation of

professional burnout since the COVID-19 outbreak.

There are many different strategies for combating stress and burnout. Some are individual, self-care focused. Others target institutional systems and processes.

Therapy can be important, too. During the early months of the pandemic, MSSC created a list of area psychiatrists and psychologists who were willing to see MSSC members and their staff who wanted some assistance. MSSC Past President Dr. Patricia Wyatt-Harris, MD, wrote an excellent column last year about the need to watch for signs of burnout in ourselves and our colleagues.

The biggest boost for many was the rollout of the vaccines. Many people felt a surge of relief and hope when they received the vaccine. The reopening of society also is lifting spirits. I'm enjoying being able to eat out and have in-person meetings.

Another valuable way to combat burnout is connecting socially with peers. It helps to be with others who understand the demands of our jobs. MSSC helps facilitate these connections.

MSSC hosted a great event this month for young physicians at a Wind Surge baseball game. Demand was so high that we "sold out" of our block of tickets. The next all-member event will be Sept. 14 at Wichita State University and will feature WSU's new president, Richard Muma, and the new president and CEO of the Kansas Health Foundation, Teresa Miller. I hope to see you there.

A physician's job is demanding and stressful – even without a pandemic. Coming together helps lift us all.

BURNOUT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

found that 49.5% of MSSC physicians surveyed exhibited signs of burnout, a slightly higher rate than physicians nationally.

"It was already an area of concern," Ofei-Dodoo said.

It's important to note, however, as COVID-19 variants seem poised to ramp up infections across the U.S.



DR. KELLERMAN

again, this latest study was conducted in May and June of 2020, when COVID-19 was still new and physicians didn't know a lot about it yet.

"There was a lot of fear and uncertainty," Kellerman said. "I don't think we can take these results and say we would have gotten the same had we done it in November and December, certainly not February or March 2021 when most of us were vaccinated by then."

What stood out last year was that physicians were scared – worried about getting sick themselves, and scared of transmitting the virus to their families. Another surprising side result was the level of anxiety among doctors who had not treated COVID-19 patients. Their stress levels were ratcheted up compared to doctors treating COVID-19 patients and becoming more familiar with it. The fear of the unknown had a profound effect on many physicians, Ofei-Dodoo said.

Still, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of burnout and stress-related problems such as depression and anxiety in physicians had been identified as an important area of public health concern, researchers said.

Physicians, compared with the general population, are at higher risk of experiencing symptoms of burnout and a dissatisfaction with work-life balance, the authors wrote. This is especially true for family physicians, along with those in emergency and internal medicine, particularly in rural areas.

"Physicians with burnout are more likely to experience motor vehicle accidents, mood disorders, and substance and alcohol abuse," the authors wrote. Other studies have shown that burnout also is associated with an increased risk of medical errors and malpractice, with decreases in quality of care, productivity and patient satisfaction.

Researchers said this latest study should serve as a tool to determining wellness interventions and developing physician support systems, including wellness and mental health support initiatives at local, state and national levels.

Even now, Ofei-Dodoo and colleagues are spearheading studies to help physicians deal with stress and burnout. One study, which was funded by the Via Christi Foundation and is currently under review to be published, revolved around a mindfulness-based stress reduction program.

Researchers found there was a significant reduction in measures of anxiety and stress, as well as improvements in resilience and compassion. Ofei-Dodoo said he's also working on a yoga-centric intervention to reduce stress and is writing a paper on that as well.

"We are local. We are doing everything to help folks in Kansas," Ofei-Dodoo said. "Organizations like the Medical Society help by recognizing the emotional effect stress has on physicians and their well-being, and ensuring appropriate programs are in place to provide emotional, mental and physical help and social support."

83% of physicians surveyed were concerned that some of their patients may be forgoing routine or acute medical care because they were afraid of being exposed to COVID-19.



DR. DICKERMAN

Medicine-Wichita, Dickerman said.

"This is not to point out any shortcoming on the part of KU," he said. "KU has done a tremendous job of training physicians and relocating physicians. From what we've seen across not only Kansas, but across the whole country, there's a predicted shortage of physicians."

The issue of not having enough physicians to cover rural Kansas is a continuing problem. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment's 2018 Health Professional Underserved Areas Report stressed that ongoing efforts are needed to fulfill a perpetually underserved population that lacks adequate medical care.

The KHSC hopes to be a part of the solution by, among other things, training more primary care doctors to address the shortage of roughly 720 PCPs in rural Kansas, Dickerman said. The American Osteopathic Association cites nearly 57% of DOs practice in primary care specialties: 31.4% are family physicians, 18.1% are internists and 6.89% are pediatricians.

"Our mission is to increase the number of physicians who train and hopefully return to Kansas," Dickerman said.

One way the DO school plans to do that is by using a clinical presentation model as its curriculum. It's a problem-based curriculum that is designed to introduce students into "clinical vignettes" and problem-solving from day one. "It's shown not only to get students engaged, but actually helps performance on national boards," Dickerman said.

The school also plans to put students into clinical immersions in their first and second years rather than waiting for the traditional third and fourth years. The school is focused on team-based learning, small groups and community-based partnerships for service projects. Simulation also will play a role in helping prepare students for clinical immersion, clinical rotations and residency, officials said. The DO school also will offer non-clinical tracks for students leaning toward research, administration or other fields.



DR. MASSON

"We've been listening to the community in Wichita and across this great state ... to really understand what it means to meet the needs of our own community, what it really means to prepare the physician of the future," Masson said.

KHSC leaders said they plan to help develop residencies in Kansas, including in communities such as Garden City with hospitals large enough to host them. They are identifying preceptors through the credentialing process and will encourage students to train more in their communities, among specialty areas, rather than do all hospital-based rotations.

"We've got to give our students exposure, ambulatory experience," Dickerman said. "There has to be a balance."

In Brief ▶▶▶

New and noteworthy



Tobacco, wellness programs at MSSC

A grant-funded program targeting tobacco use and the Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita are now part of MSSC effective July 1. Kim Neufeld and Shelley Rich lead those programs.

The grant program is funded by a Chronic Disease Risk Reduction grant through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. It focuses on tobacco prevention and control efforts that include city-level health policy development, promotion of the Kansas Tobacco Quitline, creating tobacco-free places, and assisting health care and behavioral health providers.

The Health & Wellness Coalition promotes physical activity and good nutrition. Focus areas include worksite wellness and food policy. The coalition also holds a large Working Well Conference each year.



KU Wichita Center for Clinical Research

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Have you gained weight from taking an antipsychotic medication for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder?

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GRATITUDE

addressing weight gained from the use of antipsychotic medication

In Brief ▶▶▶

New and noteworthy

New exhibit focuses on human body

Next spring, Exploration Place, Sedgwick County's science and discovery center, will transform its Grand Hall gallery into a hub of discovery, fascination and respect for the human body. An all-new permanent exhibit, called Health Inside-Out, will play on human curiosity, provoke questions and provide answers as children and their families explore the body – inside and out.

"The exhibit will serve as a platform for health literacy and career exploration," said Adam Smith, president and CEO of Exploration Place. Aligned programming will maximize the visitor experience and provide health education to students across the state.

Exploration Place is seeking financial support for the exhibit. The exhibit qualifies for the Kansas Department of Commerce Community Service Tax Credit Program, which means gifts of \$1,000 or more can qualify for a state tax credit equal to 50% of the contribution. For more information, visit exploration.org.



Child psychiatry fellowship to help with shortage of mental health providers

The University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita is creating a fellowship training program in child and adolescent psychiatry, a move that addresses a statewide shortage of mental health providers that numbers in the hundreds.

The school is adding a new faculty member experienced in running such a program and starting a fundraising campaign to support the training, KUSM-W officials said.

The Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences recently reported that Kansas probably needs more than 400 child psychiatrists to meet the demand of diagnosing and treating the state's kids and teens. Leaders said there are fewer than 100 child psychiatrists in Kansas and fewer than a dozen serving Wichita and rural Kansas.

The two-year fellowship program would train four fellows each year and help provide care to more than 500 children and adolescents annually, or about one-quarter of those who are going untreated in Sedgwick County, said Rachel Brown, MBBS, the department's chair. She is among the area's few fellowship-trained child and adolescent psychiatrists.

Contributions to the new fellowship training program in child and adolescent psychiatry can be made on the Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences giving page at <https://tinyurl.com/KSPSY>.

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Physician ENGAGEMENT

This month we feature physicians and their families and friends at a July 9 WD<40 Wind Surge baseball game at Riverfront Stadium.



WD<40
Wichita Docs Under 40



▲ KATIE ADKINS, MD, AND CAMERON ADKINS



▲ SARA PURDY, DO, AND JON PURDY WITH RYLEE, EMMA AND HENRY



▲ EMILY O'DELL, DO, MICHAEL O'DELL, COLE GILLENWATER, MD, MELISSA GILLENWATER AND JENNIFER THUENER, MD



▲ MATT FAGER AND JAMIE FAGER, MD



▲ STEPHEN GRINDEL, DO, AND JARED REGEHR, MD



▲ DEAN FLATEN, MD, WITH LINDSEY FLATEN AND TUCKER, LILY AND JASPER



▲ TIM COX, MD, AND SILAS



▲ AMY WILLIAMS, MD, AND FIANCE ANTHONY GIBSON



▲ LINDSAY STRADER, DO, WITH ATTICUS

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ROSTER UPDATE

Keep your 2021 roster current with this information.

Key: [BC] Board Certified [F] Accredited Fellowship [R] Residency [AT] Additional Training [F*] Unaccredited Fellowship

NEW MEMBERS

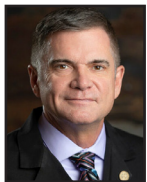


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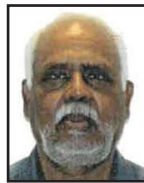


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REINSTATE TO ACTIVE



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ROSTER UPDATE *Continued*

Key: [BC] Board Certified [F] Accredited Fellowship [R] Residency [AT] Additional Training [F*] Unaccredited Fellowship



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DROPPED

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MSSC NEWS

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