# Self-Care for Healthcare Professionals: Connection between individual well-being and the ability to care for others

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## Abstract

Impaired physician and healthcare professionals can have a direct impact on patient health care and safety. While some problems of alcoholism and substance abuse among physicians have been addressed, basic concepts like healthy food and lifestyle choices, as well as mental health issues are still widely ignored. While patient safety is paramount, the medical profession might be more successful in achieving the required standards by fostering a culture committed to self-care, health and wellness.

Burnout is a common syndrome seen in healthcare workers, particularly physicians and emergency staff, who are exposed to a high level of stress at work. A survey of the topic, taken in 2011, found that close to half of doctors, 45% experienced at least one component of burnout, meaning they are emotionally exhausted, often treat patients as objects, or have lost their sense of purpose. Three years later, the survey numbers got worse. In 2014, burned-out doctors made up 54% of the profession.

The time has come for academic medicine to lead by example for the population and to practice what they preach. To do this, we must first develop a shared understanding of physician wellness followed by interventional strategies that lead to a cultural change, including a more positive educational environment for residents and faculty. We need to raise the awareness of self-care and its relation to health, well-being, and burnouts. There is a need to create an environment that allows the admitting of burnout symptoms, enable the development of preventive strategies, and create a more positive, strength-based approach to health care professional's own health and well-being.

## References

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Certified Corporate Wellness Specialist, Nutrition and Lifestyle Expert Judith Coulson is an author, speaker, coach, and consultant in Asia and Europe for the last 15 years. Judith has focused her ongoing education and research on the effects of nutrition & lifestyle choices on community culture and behaviour, and the subsequent effects on population wellbeing and health. Her quest to understand how and why people make choices, inspired her to study the science of applied behaviour economics and choice architecture. Currently Judith is finishing her MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology to better understand the emotional and mental aspect of health and well-being. Judith is Swiss, married and a mother of 2 young adults.

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