

Physician Burnout & Electronic Medical Records

By Dr. Jayesh Shah, 2016 BCMS President



Are you a physician who has to save charting until the end of the day? Or until your office staff has left for the day, and you are still finishing up your charting till late in the evening? And by the time you reach home, your kids are already asleep and your spouse is upset because you came home late again? And then you still have to log on from home for a couple more hours to finish up charting?

My physician friends, if you are in any one of these scenarios, you are not alone.

This year, in the Medscape Physician Lifestyle Report, 46 percent of all physicians responded that they have experienced burnout, which is a substantial increase since the Medscape 2013 Lifestyle Report, in which burnout was reported by slightly fewer than 40 percent of respondents.

Every time there is a survey of a group of physicians asking, "What are the top three reasons in your practice day that makes your life difficult and increases your feeling of burnout?", electronic medical records or EMRs and other documentation issues ALWAYS make the list. This is true regardless of specialty without exception. An EMR is a digital version of a paper chart that contains all of a patient's medical history from one practice and is used by providers for diagnosis and treatment.

The problem with EMR is that it is designed by people who have never seen a patient. EMR and other documentation issues continue to cause a huge burnout problem for a significant num-

ber of doctors. It has forced many doctors to retire early because of continued frustrations.

Let us help these struggling doctors collectively. Let us ask each hospital system and physician practice to find out doctors who are working on documentation till late in the evening or from home at night. I am sure there are doctors in each hospital and in each specialty who finish their work on time and are able to leave the clinic at the same time when their last patient is seen.

It is important that physician leaders who are doing well with EMR help other colleagues who are struggling to decrease physician burnout. All physicians should be able to go home on time and spend quality time with their family so that they can recharge their batteries for a brighter next day.

Let your physician colleagues know if you are struggling with EMR. It may not be a bad idea to hire a scribe or try voice-recognition software such as Dragon. Let EMR not be the reason for your burnout. Bexar County Medical Society has a physician rehabilitation committee that works with physician burnout issues. Texas Medical Association also has several programs to help with physician burnout issues.

Physicians deserve to be healthy and happy so that they can provide good health care for the community.

Stay well!

With Regards,

Dr. Jayesh Shah