Resources for Creating an Optimal Learning Environment

Wellness

As part of the AAMC support for the Statement on the Optimal Learning Environment, we are highlighting different related topics and materials created by constituents and by the AAMC. To learn more about the statement and for additional resources, please visit www.aamc.org/learningenvironment.

This first selection, gathered from MedEdPORTAL Publications and Academic Medicine, features wellness. Many medical schools and teaching hospitals have integrated active wellness programs into their curricula and communities. These programs are designed to enhance the learner experience and improve the life of the student, their cohorts, and, ultimately, patients.

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Medical Student Mental Health 3.0: Improving Student Wellness Through Curricular Changes

Medical education can have significant negative effects on the well-being of medical students. To date, efforts to improve student mental health have focused largely on improving access to mental health providers, reducing the stigma and other barriers to mental health treatment, and implementing ancillary wellness programs. Still, new and innovative models that build on these efforts by directly addressing the root causes of stress that lie within the curriculum itself are needed to properly promote student wellness. In this article, the authors present a new paradigm for improving medical student mental health, by describing an integrated, multifaceted, preclinical curricular change program implemented through the Office of Curricular Affairs at the Saint Louis University School of Medicine starting in the 2009–2010 academic year. The authors found that significant but efficient changes to course content, contact hours, scheduling, grading, electives, learning communities, and required resilience/mindfulness experiences were associated with significantly lower levels of depression symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and stress, and significantly higher levels of community cohesion, in medical students who participated in the expanded wellness program compared with those who preceded its implementation. The authors discuss the utility and relevance of such curricular changes as an overlooked component of change models for improving medical student mental health.

A Comprehensive Medical Student Wellness Program—Design and Implementation at Vanderbilt School of Medicine

Research suggests that student burnout and mental illness are increasing in U.S. medical schools. In response, students and administrators developed the Vanderbilt Medical Student (VMS) Wellness Program to promote student health and well-being through coordination of many new and existing resources. This program consists of three core components: The Advisory College Program, The Student Wellness Committee, and VMS LIVE. Each of the core components includes separate and unique individual programs, but each of these three components collaborates with the other two to accomplish the broad wellness goal of maximizing student health, happiness, and potential. The VMS Wellness Program has had early success with substantial growth and outstanding student buy-in since its inception in 2005. Preliminary data indicate that nearly every student has participated in at least two components of the VMS Wellness Program. In addition to participation, student response has been highly satisfactory, as evidenced by their positive feedback. The VMS Wellness Program is the first published model of a comprehensive medical student wellness initiative. The development and design of the program described in this article may serve as a framework for other institutions.


Teamwork & Conflict Management Workshop

This workshop addresses the topics of teamwork and conflict management between physicians and nurses, with emphasis on the potential gender implications. The goals of the workshop are to provide a unique session for female physicians, residents, and medical students focusing on female physician-nurse interactions, teamwork building, and conflict management skills. The workshop is designed to provide a wellness activity and is structured for facilitated mentoring in a group environment. By the end of the workshop participants will be able to appreciate the importance of collaboration and teamwork between physicians and nurses, recognize the potential gender stereotyping and conflicts that could arise during physician-nurse interactions, and apply the 5 key strategies to conflict management and resolution during difficult interactions.


Vanderbilt Wellness Program: Model and Implementation Guide

Since the development and implementation of the Vanderbilt School of Medicine Wellness Program, institutions across the country have been interested in developing similar programs. Some have developed their own systems to address medical student wellness while others have opted to incorporate the time-tested Vanderbilt model into the structure of their institution. While the development of new structures and programs can lead to better strategies for addressing...
medical student wellness, for many institutions starting from scratch is a daunting task and, frankly, we feel an unnecessary one.

It is our belief that the Vanderbilt model of a school sponsored wellness initiative, the Vanderbilt School of Medicine Wellness Program, has had a tremendous impact over its five years in existence. It is a major, if not the leading, factor for many students’ decisions to come to Vanderbilt. Students openly admit to a 'culture of wellness' at Vanderbilt that makes achieving a degree in medicine a unique experience. This, we feel, translates to more effective residents and overall more successful physicians, a worthy investment by any measure. We hope that institutions are able to make use of this guide as they initiate or expand medical student wellness programming at their institutions. The contents not only illustrate the Vanderbilt model for wellness programming, but offer a step-by-step approach for evaluating the needs of an institution and walk through the process of implementing the key components of a wellness initiative tailored to an institution’s needs.


**The Medical Student Wellbeing Workshop**

The goal of this workshop is to help medical students in handling their stresses. Relevant theoretical input related to stress, stressors and coping strategies in the medical context will be discussed thus participants will be able to reflect on their personal strengths and weaknesses.

The first part of this workshop will be devoted to a general discussion on the importance of managing stress, the concepts of stress, the relationships between stress, stressors and coping strategies, and the impacts of unfavorable stress on individuals.

The second part will be allocated for hands-on where participants will be able to identify their individual stress level, stressors and coping strategies through simple psychometric assessments and the results will be discussed in detail. A general overview of ways of handling stressful situations will be discussed at the end of this second session.

The third part will be allotted for group discussion on a scenario entitled “Living with Mental Health”. This session will be able to consolidate the understanding of participants on the previous inputs.

The last part of this workshop will be devoted for participants to give feedback and share their experience they have learnt from this workshop and things to be improved in future as a result of attending this workshop.
It is hoped that this workshop will be able:

1. To create awareness among participants concerning their personal stress, stressors and coping strategies.
2. To promote development of positive coping strategies among participants towards stressors.
3. To facilitate participants in developing self-improvement strategies to improve their stress management skills.


Women in Medicine Wellness Workshop: Work-Life Integration

This resource provides the framework and materials needed to implement a wellness workshop for women in medicine. The purpose is to provide a unique session for faculty, residents, and students focusing on the topics of personal wellness (via a yoga session), career goal setting and work-life integration. The structure of the workshop is designed to facilitate networking and mentoring in a relaxed setting utilizing a mosaic of peer mentoring, vertical mentoring, and small group break-out sessions with one senior mentor with multiple junior mentees. A faculty facilitator guides participants through the development of an individual plan, or work-life integration strategy, using a tool for planning professional and personal goals.


Measuring Medical Residents’ Well-Being

The purpose of this submission is to share the Resident Well-Being Scale (RWB) for critical review. The submission includes an investigation of the descriptive statistics, factors and the internal reliability of residents’ responses to the RWB scale. This submission also includes an investigation of the construct validity of the RWB by exploring potential relationships between residents’ well-being and two theoretically related constructs: the quantity of sleep and rotation demands. The development of the RWB and an investigation of the internal reliability and validity of the responses help contribute to how educators can assess residents’ well-being and inform residency program implementation. This project also serves as the beginning of a long-term project to efficiently measure the well-being of residents and other learners in the health care professions.


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