Top Trends in 2024 for Reducing Burnout in Behavioral Health

nextgen healthcare

Behavioral Health Business

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The numbers are staggering: according to industry leaders, between 50% and 75% of health care providers in the U.S. feel burned out.

The impact is troubling: staffing shortages throughout health care across a wide variety of care types leaves our most vulnerable patients at even greater risk.

The solution, however, is multidimensional: identifying the reasons why providers are increasingly burned out is a challenge, as is addressing those root causes.

But providers are solving these challenges through a combination of approaches. A major one is acknowledging that how a clinician spends his or her time with a patient is as important as how much time they spend with their patient.

In this white paper, you will learn:

Why your clinicians are more burned out than ever before

How you can support them to disrupt the cycle of burnout

What role technology can play in augmenting your efforts with your staff

Why clinicians are feeling burned out

Burnout is real.

That might sound like a simplification, but in today's gig-economy era with its pervasive "hustle and grind" mindset, we must all acknowledge the challenges that workers face, especially in health care.

"Somewhere between 50% and 75% of providers of a wide variety of types across the U.S. feel burned out," Dr. Robert Murry, Chief Medical Officer at NextGen Healthcare, said in a recent webinar. "Many of them say that they're going to retire or leave medicine within the next few years, and that's going to only exacerbate our shortage of providers."

Two recent surveys show just how stark the problem is.

In the American Psychological Association's 2023 Practitioner Pulse Survey[1] 41% of the 561 licensed psychologists surveyed agreed that they are seeing "an increase in the length of treatment course" among their patients, while 52% agreed that they are seeing "an increase in the severity of symptoms" among their patients. This is bringing an increase in workload, with 26% of respondents seeing more work than the 12 months prior to the survey, compared to 17% seeing less work:
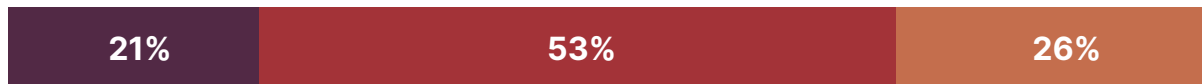
Proportion of Psychologists Seeing Changes in Their Workloads in the Last 12 Months, 2023

■ Less than 12 months ago   ■ Same as 12 months ago   ■ More than 12 months ago

Workload

17%	57%	26%

Number of Patients

21%	53%	26%

People on Waitlist

17%	44%	38%

*Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

[1] https://bhbusiness.com/2023/12/07/psychologists-face-rising-stress-and-burnout-as-patients-symptoms-worsen/

And in a 2023 survey from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing conducted by The Harris Poll, 83% of the 750 behavioral health workers polled responded that "without public policy changes, provider organizations won't be able to meet the demand for mental health or substance use treatment and care."

Murry, a practicing family physician, sees this too.

"I see it in a wide variety of specialties, and there's lots of data from both private entities and the government and peer organizations showing that health care providers of all kinds — physicians, nurses, providers in behavioral health and different specialties — they're all experiencing burnout," he said.

Inside the numbers on burnout

Studies on staff turnover have estimated an annual loss of $7,600 per physician, estimating that a 1% increase in registered nurse turnover costs the average hospital $270,800 per year.[2]

83% worry that shortages in the mental health and substance use treatment workforce will negatively impact society as a whole.

33% of the workforce report spending most of their time on administrative tasks.

68% of those who provide care to patients say the amount of time spent on administrative tasks takes away from time they could be directly supporting clients.

[2] https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep22-06-02-005.pdf

Inside the connection between visit documentation and clinician retention

We've all heard it many times: "I didn't get into this business to log data."

If clinicians aren't saying it, they're certainly thinking it. They want to spend their time doing what they came to this business to do: helping patients. Visit documentation can pull clinicians away from that work.

"In talking with our behavioral health mental professionals, they spend a full day seeing patients and trying to document as much as possible during the session, but then spend a couple of hours outside of that catching up to finish their documentation and submit it for billing," says Rafael Arechaga, Chief Information Officer of CODAC Health, Recovery & Wellness. "That causes a lot of burnout because an eight-hour day turns into a 10-hour day just so they can finish the day's work. And if you don't finish it, it rolls over to the next day and never really goes away."

That is what Murry has seen too.

"If you had to ask physicians or nurse practitioners what one thing is making you burned out, a lot of them are going to say their EHR," Murry said.

Ambient Assist, a tool in the NextGen app uses a process called "ambient listening" to allow the physician to stay present with the patient.

"It's been just over a year since Chat GPT-4 was revealed to the world—and people have had lots of fun with that," Murry said. "They're going to be able to profoundly help with this problem of provider burnout and the documentation of patient-care taking so long."

How Ambient Assist helps a provider's bottom line

CODAC has worked with NextGen for 14 years, and every new innovation has shown benefits to both providers and the bottom line. CIO Rafael Arechaga has heard a steady complaint from his clinicians: "We're turning into note-takers, typists, data-entry-type folks, and not really spending eye-to-eye contact with the patient and relating in a human way."

With Ambient Assist, providers see a 20% reduction in documentation time.

"Administratively, financially, if they gain 20% in productivity, they can add one more appointment a day," he says. "If you add one more appointment a day, that will add to the bottom line of a system that is underpaid to begin with. So it helps the financial burden as well."

Five Ways Improved Documentation Helps Reduce Burnout

When providers aren't burdened with a time-draining documentation process, they can spend more time doing what they entered the industry to do: care for patients. That reduces burnout and keeps your staff members on staff. The NextGen App and Ambient Assist are helping providers improve their documentation experience **in five ways:**

1. **It's easy to use.**

This is a 100% technology-based system with no copying and pasting needed. "Having been in health care IT for close to 21 years, our main goal is to make it easier on the provider," Arechaga says. "So we look for tools that will help that, not just in efficiency but it will help in simplicity so that the providers aren't scrambling or need extreme amounts of training to be able to use the tool."

2. **It saves time for clinicians.**

The app saves up to two hours daily on documentation, a 20% reduction in documentation time, generating a SOAP note in 30 seconds after the patient visit. Arechaga thinks that 20% figure is low. "It's an under-estimation," he says. "The worst case scenario is that you save 20%. We're hoping we see higher gains than that. One session can save much more than that."

3. **It's patient-centric.**

"When our providers started in this business, their goal was to give patients tools to cope with their issues and anxiety," Arechaga says. "This EHR frees providers up so that they can spend more time focusing on the actual patient. It turns the focus back into the provider spending time looking and engaging with the patient."

Five Ways Improved Documentation Helps Reduce Burnout (cont.)

4. **It leads with intelligence.**

The tool generates notes within seconds that are 90% accurate. "That's kind of the amazing thing of what artificial and augmented intelligence tools are providing us: it is taught the right therapeutic methods of interpreting language," Arechaga says. "Not only is it accurate because it hears a conversation. It summarizes it in a therapeutic way. It also hears everything. A person that you know well might be telling you their story and happen to mention a suicide, and you may not have caught it. This technology will say, 'You might want to ask questions around this area to make sure that it gets addressed.'"

5. **It is HIPAA-compliant.**

"Our medical record is protected by many means, not just what the software does itself," Arechaga says. "The cybersecurity layers that the organization puts on top of it (makes this) HIPAA-compliant in the sense that it follows all the necessary restrictions with encryption and storage. That's why you might hear 'protection': it is protected from bad actors, so to speak."

Remove burnout where it starts

The best operators today are bringing everything to the table to reduce staff burnout. AI is part of that approach.

"By providing this technology, not only is Ambient Assist helping the patient and the provider, it is helping the organization as well," Arechaga says.

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Or scan the QR code to learn more: