



UROLOGY WELLNESS POLICY (08-15-2020)

The UTHSCSA Urology Residency Program is a 5-year, ACGME accredited program under the Department of Urology in accordance with curriculum guidelines from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The Aims of the program are to maintain and develop an outstanding educational curriculum, facilitate resident and fellow advancement to independence and excellence in the comprehensive practice of Medicine, mentor residents, fellows and faculty in the generation of academic projects, and promote the delivery of high-quality clinical care. The Urology Program Leadership recognizes that faculty, residents and fellows may encounter challenges during their training, stemming from a demanding learning curve, diverse professional obligations, concurrent core board examinations, difficult patient encounters, and any personal problems that may emerge during their time in training. Therefore, our program has created the following Wellness Policy to raise awareness and facilitate support systems for the trainee.

Wellness:

Definition: "...the state of being in good health, especially as an actively pursued goal"

There are many variations on the theme of wellness, but the main idea is that a 'well' person is untethered by physical, mental or social stresses that can inhibit the development of that person's full potential. A sense of security & contentedness accompanies a higher state of learning and professional & social functioning. In residency, there are many things that pull at our sense of well-being: long hours, poor sleep habits, the needs of our patients, the needs of our teams, poor eating habits, family responsibilities, lack of social support structure, a need to cram learning into ever shorter periods, testing, evaluations, hostile work environments, etc. The list goes on and on. There is no magic wand that can make it go away but some aspects can be managed to lessen the impact.

The first step in management is recognizing that none of us are immune to stressors despite our innate thoughts that we will be able to 'take it' and keep going. Many times, we may think we just need to work harder, more efficiently and quicker to make the problems go away. Subtly though, stress affects our ability to concentrate, learn, be organized and cope with difficult situations. This may manifest by withdrawal, depression, anger, lashing out, "unprofessional behavior", physical illness, etc. The term "burnout" has been an especially poignant descriptor for the syndrome.

We would rather not have residency lead to complete dissolution of residents' psyche or be a source of PTSD later in life. To that end, the department began development of measures to assist the residents and hopefully prevent undue stress and burnout.

The departmental Wellness Curriculum has been designed to begin to address the issues of excessive stress in the residency. Beginning each July with a discussion of the signs and symptoms of Burnout. Additional skills such as recognizing critical conversations, basics of negotiating, awareness of emotional intelligence, financial health, asset protection & insurance needs, etc. are added later in the year to help build habits that will hopefully alleviate some of the life stressors that are unique to residency.

Residents and faculty are encouraged to watch for subtle signs in colleagues and intervene or report as needed.

An added component of the wellness program starting in the AY 2020-2021 is the development of a residency advisory committee and identification of resident wellness champions. The idea is if residents are more invested in the process then they will receive greater benefits. Advisory committee members and champions with the help of program faculty will meet on a regular basis to discuss curriculum and make recommendations moving forward.

Physician Burnout and Wellness:

Identification of Physician Burnout and other wellness issues.

1. The Urology program will encourage and support the identification of burnout and wellness issues through self-screening tools including the Interactive Screening Program (ISP), a voluntary self-screening questionnaire distributed to all residents and fellows twice a year and available all year round; reports from the office of GME on ACGME faculty and residents surveys; and Needs Assessments surveys developed by the office of GME.
2. Residents / Fellows will be invited to discuss either general or specific factors that might lead to a wellness concern or promote or exacerbate physician burnout in a formal or informal setting with program leadership.
3. Residents and Fellows will be invited to discuss any personal wellness issues in a confidential setting with the Program Director or Faculty Adviser or with resources available within the institution (see below item 4).
4. The CCC will review (resident / fellow) performance and discuss any issues that may be indicative of burnout, biannually or contemporaneously as they are suspected.

Resources for Improvement of Morale and Wellbeing:

The Urology Department will hold activities that promote wellness in an integrated and holistic manner based on the domains proposed by the GME Wellness Mosaic including:

1. Community Building through Faculty/Resident/Fellow Welcome Gathering, End of the Year celebration, Clinic social functions (pot-luck lunch, holiday celebrations, etc.)
2. Wellness Lectures, Ethical Issues and Challenging Patients conversations, Shared Values and Monthly Clinic Meeting with Staff and Management to foster cooperation and understanding
3. Assessment and identification of stress, risk of difficult transition into residency, and systemic issues as discussed
4. Departmental and Institutional resources including GME Behavioral Health Consultants offering academic success coaching, mental health counseling, and screening for learning difficulties and other mood disorders; Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Psychiatric Services through UT Health SA Psychiatric Department outpatient clinic, interventions for Struggling Learners; access to crisis intervention services; and other indicated services will be made available and encouraged for resident, fellows or faculty who express interest in needing these services. Services through the GME Behavioral Health Center or Psychiatric services both within and outside the institution may be suggested but never mandated.

Sleep and Fatigue Management:

1. All faculty, residents and fellows are expected to train for fatigue management during the onboarding process to our institution.
2. Faculty, residents and fellow peers will be directed to look for signs of fatigue in themselves and others.
3. If faculty or fellows are detected to be fatigued, we will make the appropriate arrangements to relieve them of clinical duty until they are well.
4. A Ride Share program is available for residents and fellows that feel too exhausted to drive after calls and night shifts.

Professionalism:

Definition: Professionalism is a nebulous concept that changes with the situation. It is often defined in the negative – recognition of ‘unprofessional’ behavior as opposed to defining the traits that should be emphasized in the positive. In general, for teachers (attending staff), it means putting the needs of the student ahead of self, maintaining a demeanor that is conducive to learning and behaving in an even-handed, moral and ethical manner toward the student and others. For students (residents, fellows), it means focusing on the learning tasks at hand, respecting fellow students and teachers, minimizing distractive behaviors and striving to improve. For both, honesty, integrity, self-reflection, fairness and respect are important features of all interactions.

It is expected that our (residents / fellows), and the faculty members who help train them demonstrate their best professional behavior at all times. Mistreatment, bullying, humiliation, intimidation, or other inappropriate behaviors, in accordance with institutional policies, will not be tolerated within the training program or clinical work environment.

Program Leadership will address lapses in professional behavior by (residents/fellows) with the assistance, if needed, of the office of GME. Program Leaders will also bring to the attention of the Division Chief or Departmental Chair any issues or lapses in professionalism by faculty toward trainees within the program with appropriate counseling or remediation enacted as required.

Supportive or corrective actions for learners will be informed by GME policies including the Impairment Policy and the Challenged Learner Algorithm.

Impairment Coverage:

In case of impairment, coverage will be secured following UT Health SA Impairment Policy.