

PRACTITIONER HEALTH AND IMPAIRMENT RECOGNITION

Burnout and Impairment among physicians

- Burnout is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion that results in depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishment at work.
- The emotionally exhausted clinician is overwhelmed by work to the point of feeling fatigued, unable to face the demands of the job, and unable to engage with others.
- The burned-out clinician may develop a sense of cynical detachment from work and view people—especially patients—as objects.
- Fatigue, exhaustion, and detachment emerge such that clinicians no longer feel effective at work because they have lost a sense of their ability to contribute meaningfully.

Physical signs and symptoms of physician burnout:

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Tiredness that does not respond to adequate rest
- Lowered immunity, feeling sick a lot
- Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches
- Change in appetite or sleep habits
- Drop in libido or impotence

Emotional signs and symptoms of physician burnout:

- Sense of failure and self-doubt
- Feeling helpless, trapped, and defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Loss of motivation
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment
- Activities you used to enjoy are no fun anymore

Behavioral signs and symptoms of physician burnout:

- Withdrawing from responsibilities
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
- Cynicism and a negative attitude towards your patients and co-workers
- Taking out your frustrations on others
- Driving aggressively, road rage
- Snapping at your spouse, children, staff or co-workers inappropriately
- Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early

Practitioners who are struggling to conquer **impairment** problems should **seek help as soon as possible**.

The Professional Health Monitoring Program (PHMP) administers the Voluntary Recovery Program (VRP) in order to fulfill the requirements of all professional practice acts containing sections addressing the management of professionals suffering from mental or physical disorders.

If you are a licensed health care professional who wishes to be considered for VRP enrollment, or suspect a licensee is impaired, please contact the VRP for further assistance at 800-554-3428.

Additional Resources:

[Home - Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation \(drlornabreen.org\)](http://drlornabreen.org)