

Comment on the Article “Burnout Among Portuguese Residents: A Case for Change”

Comentário ao Artigo “Burnout no Internato Médico Português: Uma Perspetiva de Mudança”

Keywords: Burnout, Professional; Internship and Residency; Portugal

Palavras-chave: Burnout Profissional; Internato e Residência; Portugal

Dear Editor,

It was with great interest that we read the article “Burnout Among Portuguese Residents: A Case for Change” published in the October 2024 issue of Acta Médica Portuguesa.¹

As stated in the article, residency is a very stressful period, with residents often working well beyond the expected hours, negatively impacting their work-life balance. Therefore, burnout appears to be more frequent in medical residents, according to the first nationwide online survey conducted by the Portuguese Council of Medical Residents in 2023.² Burnout syndrome is an important occupational phenomenon, which has been recognized by the World Health Organization in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11).³

Given this, we would like to share an initiative implemented in our family practice unit in Oeiras. Since 2018, we have implemented a burnout prevention program, organized by a psychologist and a representative of each professional group: secretaries, nurses, doctors and resident doctors.

The format of the program has changed over the years. Initially, it consisted of weekly Balint group sessions for all professionals and later it was divided by professional groups. The one-hour session consisted of a first moment where a participant shares a challenging or distressing situation experienced at work, followed by questions from the rest of the group. Afterward, that person is asked to listen

to the group reflection without engaging in the discussion. Then, the participant is invited back in to make a final comment and share how they felt while listening to the group. In the end, the psychologist leads a guided meditation before the participants resume their work.

In 2023, the program was altered to keep the participation rates high and after a discussion on what format the professionals thought would work best for them. Currently, during the first part of the unit’s monthly meeting, one of the four professional groups organizes an activity which is guided by the psychologist.

Additionally, since 2011, the unit has had a biannual questionnaire, based on the Maslach original model for burnout syndrome, which all the professionals fill out anonymously. The results are shared in our meetings, where we discuss strategies to minimize burnout and promote healthy work environments.

Ultimately, we believe burnout is a subject of the utmost interest in the fast-paced and heavy workload-focused society we live in. Sharing different strategies to prevent burnout is important to ensure high-quality healthcare for everyone.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

GGM: Conceptualization, writing of the manuscript, revision and editing.

BPP: Conceptualization, writing of the manuscript, revision and editing.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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