



# AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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## Statement of support for NAM wellness initiative

The American College of Gastroenterology is committed to physician well-being as integral to the quality of patient care and the vitality of our profession. Membership in the American College of Gastroenterology is multidisciplinary, including gastroenterologists, surgeons, radiologists, hepatologists, pediatricians, pathologists, nurses and others with a shared interest in the care of patients with digestive diseases. The College promotes the highest standards in medical education and is guided by its commitment to meeting the educational and professional needs of clinical gastroenterology practitioners. More than 14,000 individuals from 86 countries are members of the ACG. Our initiative to promote clinician well-being and decrease burnout includes four areas: Research, Awareness, Education, Advocacy and Building Community.

**Research and Awareness:** Substantial data on physician burnout in many fields of medicine demonstrate overall rates of approximately 50 percent. In 2013, the ACG Professionalism and Wellness initiative was established. We performed the first detailed survey of burnout in gastroenterologists in 2013-2014. We found that 50 percent of our members surveyed have one or more component of burnout. This affects all types of employment, private practice and academics. We also documented higher rates in early career physicians, women, and those doing more patient care related work at home in addition to domestic chores and family care. We are identifying practical solutions for improved work life integration and the practice of medicine. Manuscripts will ensure broad dissemination of this important information.

**Education and Awareness:** The College has committed to ensure our members recognize the existence of burnout, its impact on providers, and strategies available to mitigate it while enhancing physician wellness. Since 2013, burnout and physician wellness lectures have been incorporated into our regional post graduate courses, our annual Practice Management course and the ACG Annual Scientific meeting. In addition, lectures are featured on our bi-monthly blog post, our web-based ACG Education

Universe site, and in our flagship clinical journal, *The American Journal of Gastroenterology*. The College has established a Professionalism Committee whose mandate is to be responsible for promoting professionalism within the ACG, gastroenterology, and medicine and to serve as the primary forum for maintaining and promoting professionalism, focusing on patient-centered care, improving the patient-physician relationship, and providing resources for the College's membership to address issues of personal wellbeing. The committee published an article "How I Approach It: Strategies to Combat Physician Burnout in Gastroenterology" : <http://www.nature.com/ajg/journal/vaop/ncurrent/pdf/ajg2017251a.pdf>).

**Advocacy:** While personal strategies may be useful to mitigate burnout, the College recognizes that factors and systems that contribute to physician burnout must be addressed to solve this problem. To that end, we have lobbied extensively at the state and federal level to improve the burdensome Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program. The College has a Board of Governors which is elected by ACG members in various states and regions. These "boots on the ground" have led efforts at the state and local levels to help identify burnout and explore ways to reduce its causes at the practice level. College members have advocated at the state level in several states to reduce other regulatory and reporting burdens such as pre-authorizations. We have joined the federal initiative introduced by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "Patients Before Paperwork," aimed at reducing regulatory burdens for health care providers. We recognize the importance of leadership skills and training, and have incorporated wellness into our leadership programs for "rising" College leaders.

**Community:** In addition to an enhanced focus on burnout at our educational meetings, both nationally and locally, we have also used private interactive online communities for our members (e.g., the ACG Circles such as the Women in GI Circle) to address a variety of issues impacting the practice of gastroenterology and physician wellbeing. These communities provide a forum to share information about burnout, from individual experience and the published literature, and to offer peer support. For fellows-in-training, the College also offers a mentoring program and opportunities for networking and mentorship, such as the North American Conference of GI Fellows, as well as other workshops on career development and negotiation. <http://gi.org/membership/the-acg-professionalism-and-wellness-initiative/#community>