

## American College of Cardiology

No matter what size or type, healthcare practice hasn't gotten any easier in the past twenty years. Balancing the needs of patients with workforce well-being, while also navigating changing federal and state regulatory requirements and addressing demands from payers, practice partners and hospital or health system executives, keeps many a cardiovascular professional up at night.

Evidence is clear that these and other stressors are taking tolls on physicians and other health care professionals in the United States. Regarding suicide, the most extreme example of loss of well-being, the physician suicide rate has recently been estimated to be 400 per year, or twice the *per capita* rate of the general population. The suicide rate for nurses has been less consistently reported but it was estimated in 2002 to be 1.6 times higher for female nurses than for the general population. These rates constitute an underappreciated epidemic and represent, in part, a failure of the medical professions to effectively provide care to their own members.

As the professional home for more than 54,000 members of the cardiovascular care team, helping practices and clinicians balance the realities of the current health care environment with patient needs, as well as their own needs, is a key strategic priority for the American College of Cardiology (ACC). Without a strong, diverse and healthy workforce, achieving the College's vision of a world where innovation and knowledge optimize cardiovascular care and outcomes is not possible. Getting from where we are to where we want to be will not occur without focused attention and rigorous effort.

Over the last several years, the ACC, working through its robust member sections, has conducted surveys of its members regarding the major challenges in their professional lives. Findings from these surveys, as well as input from member leaders across the College's 50 state chapters, have been used to inform health policy statements and white papers, as well as to define tools and resources necessary for professional success. Among the additional tools are a robust mentoring program linking mentors with mentees, and webinars, podcasts and educational modules focused on non-clinical competencies like professionalism, workforce wellbeing, and avoiding burnout. Additionally, workforce wellbeing is a critical component of educational programming at both the ACC's annual Cardiovascular Summit (designed to provide practices and healthy systems with contemporary strategies for quality improvement, operational excellence, finance and leadership) and its Annual Scientific Session.

This is only the tip of the iceberg. The ACC is fully committed to helping its members find, implement and share innovative solutions to burnout, attrition, and poor team functioning. As demands on practices and clinicians continue to grow, it is imperative that cardiovascular professionals are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to not only survive, but to thrive, in today's health care environment. The mission of the College – to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health – depends on it.