

# HealthFirst

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS INITIATIVE AT FAU

The Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University is committed to the health and wellbeing of all students, residents, faculty and staff. To address the challenges to physician wellness, we created the HealthFirst Health and Wellness Initiative in August of 2017, beginning with medical students. The program has expanded each year to engage all stakeholders throughout the College of Medicine community. The mission of the initiative is to promote an evidence-based holistic approach to wellness through curricular innovations, hands-on experiences and community engagement. The overarching goal is to facilitate a continuum of wellbeing through the education of both future and current doctors in wellness practices for themselves, their future patients and the community. To this end, we utilize a tripartite approach to integrating wellness elements under the pillars of exercise, nutrition and stress-management with three primary targets: the curriculum, the culture and the community.

**Undergraduate Medical Education:** Our initiative recognizes that some of the biggest challenges for students, residents and future physicians surround the active management of stress to combat anxiety, depression and burnout. To this end we provide medical students with workshops to enhance stress management skills including cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness techniques. In addition to these workshops offered through the Office of Student Affairs, we have embedded mandatory wellness activities within the medical curriculum in subject-appropriate coursework to provide opportunities for students to learn and experience the key skills necessary for wellbeing. We also offer regular opportunities for students to discuss and debrief experiences in clinical settings that pose moral and/or ethical challenges. HealthFirst partners with our Student Wellness Interest Group to support student-driven activities that promote wellbeing.

**Graduate Medical Education:** The maintenance of student wellness is only sustainable if all aspects of the medical school and its residency programs are similarly engaged in activities that promote personal and environmental wellbeing. The UME Director for Student Success and Wellness coordinates with the Dean for Graduate Medical Education to provide opportunities for faculty, staff and resident education and participation in wellness activities. The GME Oversight Committee has also appointed a Graduate Medical Education Wellbeing Subcommittee, which is comprised of Faculty, Residency Program Directors, and Residents. The Office of Graduate Medical Education conducts internal residency program reviews to assess the challenges to resident wellbeing and to propose both overarching and program-specific recommendations. We partner with the Palm Beach Medical Society Physician Wellness Program to provide anonymous physician-centered wellness resources including a network of community physicians who treat substance use and mental health challenges. In addition, we have created a program-wide central repository of available online resources that support physical and mental health.

**Faculty, Staff and Community:** As the name HealthFirst implies, we feel strongly that maintaining good health should be the first priority of everyone – not only in the medical school, but also within the community at large. Throughout the year, HealthFirst presents a “Wellness in Medicine” lecture series open to all faculty, staff, residents, students and outside visitors. The individual lectures highlight topics of nutrition, exercise and stress-management by nationally-recognized thought leaders, who address these topics to the College of Medicine community and beyond. We engage with local restaurants, hospitals, and wellness practitioners to educate all stakeholders in our community. Our students, staff, residents and faculty are able to participate in the Peaceful Mind, Peaceful Life Wellness series at a partner hospital to receive instruction in wellness best practices in the areas of meditation, yoga, nutrition at no personal cost. In addition, HealthFirst coordinates with the wellness center of our College of Medicine Clinical Faculty Practice, to leverage resources and provide additional opportunities for wellness education and service learning activities between the medical school and the community.