Stress and burnout among medical students: Exploring the differences between female and male millennials

Objective: Stress and burnout are commonly reported among millennial medical students. A medical student's perception and response to stress can affect their health, delivery of quality care and practice of patient safety. The purpose of this study is to explore the prevalence and gender differences in burnout and coping mechanisms used in a sample of third-year, millennial medical students rotating at a Southern California hospital.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted with 139 third-year, medical students. Questions regarding perception and management of stress were administered. Burnout and associated characteristics of emotional exhaustion, cynicism and decreased professional efficacy were assessed. The validated instrument used for this was the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS). Descriptive and chi-square analyses were performed.

Results: In this sample, 114/139 (82.0%) students reported their gender: 55/114 (48.2%) females and 59/114 (51.8%) males. The mean age was 26.4±3.72 years old. Emotional exhaustion, cynicism and decreased professional efficacy were prevalent among the students with 19/139 (13.8%) reporting high-level scores on all three burnout characteristics. Statistical significant gender differences (p<0.05) were found regarding perception and management of stress. Compared to females, more males noted that stress did not bother them ($\chi^2=4.509, p<0.05$) or they did not pay attention to stress ($\chi^2=4.961, p<0.05$). However, with respect to stress management, female students were more likely than their male counterparts to eat sweets ($\chi^2=4.431, p<0.05$), practice yoga ($\chi^2=5.719, p<0.05$) or seek professional help ($\chi^2=4.373, p<0.05$).

Conclusion: Burnout is frequently experienced among third-year medical students suggesting a need for early effective wellness interventions in medical training. Further assessments regarding how medical students perceive and respond to stress including potential gender differences is recommended.

Biography

Stefanie A Bughi is a Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California Los Angeles. He attended the University of Bucharest; School of Medicine in Romania, he has completed his Internship and Residency in Internal Medicine at Hennemann University Northeastern Pennsylvania Affiliated Hospitals and fellowship in Endocrinology at LAC+USC Medical Center in 1989. He joined the Clinical Faculty at USC Keck School of Medicine in 1989. Presently, he works as a Physician Specialist at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where he also serves as Patient Safety Officer, Chair of the Physician Well-Being Committee and Chair of the Graduate Medical Education. His research interests include the endocrinology of stress, the implications of stress on psychosomatic disorders, and the well-being of health-care providers. He has actively participated at Rancho’s Annual Women’s Health Conference, where in the last five years he has presented topics such as: ”7 Habits of Successful Aging,” ” Re-setting the Biological Clock,” ” Role of Minerals and Supplements in Healthy Aging” among others.

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