

Healthcare Provider Self-care

Healthcare providers have higher rates of depression and suicide and are less likely to seek help compared to the general population. It is therefore important for healthcare providers to regularly engage in self-care and ensure that their mental health needs do not go untreated.

In This Section

Physician Suicide

Provides an overview of suicide rates and related risk factors among healthcare providers and links to additional information on physician depression and suicide.

Tips and Resources for Healthcare Provider Self-care

This section provides tips for practicing self-care and resources for self-care.

Physician Suicide

There is one more high-risk group for suicide that must be highlighted, and that is YOU and your staff!

Physicians have higher rates of suicide, suicide risk, and symptoms of depression than the general population, and at the same time are less likely to seek mental health treatment.¹ For male physicians, the suicide rate is 1.41 times higher than the general male population, and for female physicians, this risk is even higher, at 2.27 times greater than the general female population.¹ Physicians are even more prone to the stigma surrounding mental health care, and report time constraints and concerns about reputation and confidentiality as additional barriers to seeking treatment.¹

Risk for suicide increases among physicians when mental health conditions go untreated; self-medicating, even with prescription medications, may temporarily reduce some symptoms of depression and anxiety, but the underlying issue remains untreated. “Practice what you preach” and model good self-care and attention to your mental health.

If you are concerned about the stigma of seeking help for mental health issues, consider that, ultimately, unaddressed mental health conditions and their effects are more likely to have a negative impact on a physician’s professional reputation and practice than getting help and treatment early.¹



Other Healthcare Professions

Veterinarians have also been found to have a substantially higher rate of suicide and suicidal thoughts, up to three times the national average, than the general public.

Find more facts about physician depression and suicide here: <http://afsp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ten-facts-about-physician-suicide.pdf> or listen to a podcast from Emergency Medicine Reviews and Perspectives (EMRAP) on the subject: <https://www.emrap.org/episode/suicideriskin/suicideriskin>

¹ Physician and Medical Student Depression and Suicide Prevention. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/physician-medical-student-depression-suicide-prevention/>.

Tips and Resources for Healthcare Provider Self-care

How do you take care of yourself?:

Physicians and other healthcare providers must routinely and intentionally engage in self-care to be at their best for their patients, their families, and themselves.

The Healthcare Toolbox provides excellent and concise advice on physician self-care. The authors stress the importance of:

- Awareness of one's own emotional reactions and distress when confronting others' difficult and traumatic experiences
- Connecting with others by talking about reactions with trusted colleagues or others who will listen
- Maintaining a balance between one's professional and personal life, with a focus on self-care such as exercise, relaxation, and stress management

Additionally, seek professional help when symptoms of depression, anxiety or other mental health or substance use issues impact your daily personal or professional functioning.

Find other great tips on caring for yourself at:

<https://healthcaretoolbox.org/self-care-for-providers.html>

or go to the National Academy of Medicine website:

@theNAMedicine

400
U.S. physicians take
their own lives
every year.

Let's talk about it.

Breaking the Culture of Silence on Physician Suicide

An NAM Perspective

Source: Andrew & Brenner, 2015

www.nam.edu/Perspectives