

FIND TIME FOR YOU

It's no secret that physicians are more stressed than ever before. In fact, the recently released "Medscape Lifestyle Report 2016: Burnout and Bias" (www.medscape.com) suggests burnout—defined as "a loss of enthusiasm for work, feelings of cynicism, and a low sense of personal accomplishment"—is reaching a critical level among US physicians.

While dermatologists and plastic surgeons report lower percentages of burnout (43 and 45 percent, respectively) than critical care, urology, and emergency medicine specialists (55 percent each), the survey found higher reported burnout rates for every specialty and higher rates of severity of burnout than ever before. When asked how severe their burnout is on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 equals "It does not interfere with my life" and 7 equals "It is so severe that I am thinking of leaving medicine altogether," dermatologists reported an average severity rating of 4.04 and plastic surgeons of 4.36. So even among our happy aesthetic subset, all is not well.

It seems obvious that time away from work would help reduce our stress, but physicians traditionally are not the best at taking time off. For one thing, the very process of becoming a physician tends to self-select more workaholic personality types. Add to that increasing overhead—present whether the office is open or closed—and it becomes easy to come up with hundreds of reasons why it's not a good time to take vacation. But there's actually one very compelling reason to get away: According to the 2015 Medscape Lifestyle Report, physicians who took at least two weeks of vacation per year were less likely to report burnout. And several studies have shown that vacation can improve overall health and well-being.

So, as patients, friends, and family members share their summer vacation plans and memories with you, take the

time to plan your own getaway. Or if summer isn't the best time because of your family or patient schedule, look for another time of year that makes sense. Every specialty and region has slower and busier times. Dermatology traditionally is slower in January and February, while those are popular months for patients wanting to hide from family and friends after plastic surgery. Winter in the north tends to be slower than in the south as "snowbird" patients migrate. And the end of August into early September are times when parents are too busy getting their kids set for school or moving them to college to take care of themselves. Alternatively, if the "waste" of time it takes just to travel to and from a location gnaws at you, perhaps find time before or after attending a conference in an interesting locale for some personal time.

We somehow find the time to fit in the patient desperate "to see us now," to help our staff with their personal issues, stay up-to-date with changing practice regulations and relevant medical advances, and do all the day-to-day things we have become responsible for with our friends, families, and communities. We must also find the time to take care of ourselves. Planning a vacation does take some work, but it's worth it. Time off offers you a chance to relax, decompress, and rejuvenate, which will make you a better physician in the long term.

Whether your idea of a relaxing vacation is sitting on a beach, skiing black diamonds, or exploring new cities, we hope you'll make the time now to make plans for you! ■



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