



WellSpan York Hospital York, Penn.

The AHA Physician Alliance provides resources to connect hospitals with work being done across the field to address the individual, environmental, and systemic factors that contribute to burnout and to foster resilience and well-being. You may find more case studies at our [knowledge hub](#).

Overview

As a community teaching hospital and Level 1 trauma center, WellSpan York Hospital provides care for highly complex patients in a region with substantial socioeconomic challenges. WellSpan York Hospital, part of WellSpan Health's integrated regional health system, started to see an increase in the rate of retiring physicians and in the two-year turnover for their younger physicians. A 2015 retreat, held to connect leadership with highly engaged clinical physicians, brought to light increased physician workplace stress due to staffing constraints, increasing burden of electronic health records, and other factors related to health care field changes.

WellSpan York Hospital was determined to reduce burnout and address drivers of stress from regulatory and financial changes in the health field. The hospital revamped its existing wellness committee and addressed top physician pain points to improve retention.

The outgoing medical staff president, Mark Catterall, M.D., and incoming medical staff president, Paul Tolerico, M.D., took on physician well-being as a major project after hearing from front-line physicians at the staff retreat. The first step was to reconstitute the hospital's physician wellness committee into an action-oriented team.

Impact

With the success of the wellness committee (as assessed by employed physicians), the group was expanded to a wellness council, which represents both employed and private practice physicians and takes on larger physician issues. Not only did this work help physicians focus on leading improvements in patient outcomes through their predominant role in the hospital's quality and performance committee, this group now functions as the health system's think tank for driving quality improvement.

The results? People are engaged. More graduating trainees now are being retained as faculty. The medical staff has shown greater interest in leadership opportunities in recent months, with a larger number of physician nominations for medical staff officer and board positions and a rise in clinical committee involvement.

Leadership deployed a survey in early 2016 to physicians employed by WellSpan, asking: "How can we improve your life?" and "What can we do to change?" Survey results were analyzed by the wellness committee, which identified eight major themes. Out of 650 medical staff and employed physicians, nearly 40 percent responded in 36 hours, with 90 percent leaving comments to sug-

Survey Results: Top Physician Requests

1. Physician-led support groups
2. More clinical support
3. On-site fitness center
4. Networking/socializing events
5. Better hospital parking
6. More legal and financial counseling
7. Better physician workspace areas
8. Protected lounge with food access

gest interventions that hospital leadership could deploy. Sixty-two percent of the surveyed physicians reported burnout, as compared to national rates ranging from 42 percent to 54 percent. The wellness committee, chaired by Mark Lavalley, M.D., developed a list of responsive action items and successfully deployed all the items within a one-year period.

Taking Quick Action

Leadership at WellSpan York Hospital focused on creating early wins that could be achieved quickly and improve morale. The hospital and WellSpan Medical Group sponsored a wellness conference for employed and independent staff physicians to reinforce best practices for managing stress and preventing burnout. The hospital also established a doctor valet service by expanding existing valet services for patients to also serve physicians driving in for patient emergencies. In addition, “provider” was changed to “physician” on medical staff communications to reflect clinical training. Other quick improvements included redesigning a badge-access doctors’ lounge, including adding healthier food options and creating an on-site fitness space with a meditation area and smart TVs.

Fostering a Sense of Community

Hospital leadership and the medical staff partnered with the WellSpan Medical Group to develop a new physician onboarding navigator program. Through

this program, each new doctor is paired with a “buddy” physician during onboarding to help them become acclimated to the community and its cultural, social, and spiritual opportunities. Events, such as Friday Family Movie Night, bring together physicians with younger children for family-friendly food and movies.

Developing New Leaders

WellSpan created a Physician Leadership Academy in 2016 that provides leadership training to select physicians interested in leadership opportunities. This has prompted curriculum projects to address burnout and engagement. In addition, leadership rounds give administrative and physician leaders the opportunity to hear firsthand from clinical staff throughout the hospital and offers insights into their concerns.

Physician-led Quality Improvement

The peer-review disciplinary process and other processes were changed to be more physician centered. The quality committee, which had been administrator-driven and perfunctory, was re-envisioned as a quality and performance committee, with the majority of quality improvement reviews led by physicians.

Lessons Learned

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for physician engagement. WellSpan York Hospital learned that physicians face a variety of challenges as a result



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of the rapid change in medicine. Some physicians may struggle with the EHR, while others may struggle with work-life balance. It is important to listen to the medical staff and address issues that span their work and personal lives. Doing so allows them the space to reconnect to the primary mission of medicine – delivering compassionate, high-quality patient care. Medical staff physicians want to feel valued and respected; they yearn for opportunities to develop professionally and help set hospital direction.

Future Goals

Under the direction of medical staff president Carlos Roberts, M.D., and vice president Robert Sterling, M.D., WellSpan York Hospital will focus on a physician volunteer corps, with the goal of finding grassroots outlets for physicians to address

important community issues, such as gun violence and the opiate crisis, that affect the hospital. This corps will continue the physician wellness mission by providing opportunities for doctors to give back to the community, with a focus on volunteerism.

Achieving physician wellness is a dynamic goal, and hospital leadership expects that new opportunities to promote wellness will develop. The administrative and physician leadership at WellSpan York Hospital is determined to remain highly engaged in wellness activity for years to come.

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