
AVOIDING BURNOUT

Supporting you to face the tide of overwhelming demand



Welcome to the first of twelve newsletters, highlighting research that addresses the top challenges currently facing general practice...

Primary care is facing a time of unprecedented demand. Huge sacrifices have been made to adapt to the challenges posed by a global pandemic and deliver the COVID-19 vaccination programme and now it feels like patient demand will always exceed our capacity. Newspaper portrayals of General Practice are often negative, impacting on recruitment, whilst also raising unrealistic patient expectations and complaints. These conditions risk causing burnout, a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

The drive to build resilience, the ability to bounce back from adversity, can be divisive, with some perceiving this to imply that individuals are at fault, rather than their working environment. Consequently there has been a push to move resilience building beyond the individual to include systemic work issues.

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes... including you.”

- ANNE LAMOTT

A qualitative study exploring General Practitioners’ views on strategies to cope with increasing workloads, identified four main themes for workload management: patient-level, GP-level, practice-level, and systems-level strategies (1). **To help protect you from burnout, consider applying at least one of the examples highlighted below.**

Patient	GP	Practice	System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consistent self-care messages from all staff ✓ Self-care advice on practice website/ in reception ✓ Education through media, schools and public health campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reducing sessions/ Portfolio career ✓ Self-care (eating well, exercise, sleep, spending time with family and friends, hobbies and interests) ✓ Annual leave (consider locum cover/ restricting number absent at one time) ✓ Mindfulness/ self-help books ✓ Delegation of tasks ✓ Strategies to manage patients with multiple problems ✓ Recruitment of more GPs (if funding/ workforce available) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Helping duty doctor out when they are struggling ✓ Opportunities to catch up through coffee/ lunch breaks together ✓ Telephone triage ✓ Workflow management ✓ Innovative use of new PCN roles ✓ Extended roles for nursing staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strategies to improve GP recruitment ✓ Reducing bureaucracy ✓ GP Federations/ Hubs ✓ Redistributing workload and improving communication with secondary care (challenge inappropriate delegation of work/ invite hospital colleagues to spend time in primary care)



A further qualitative study of 23 GPs working in Northern England (2), highlighted the importance of a work-life balance, **cutting non-essential work**. An **ability to flex and adapt to change** was also acknowledged as important; something achieved by clinicians in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A third theme highlighted that the **resilience of GPs depended upon their team and organisation, not just the individual**. One doctor reported thriving after changing practices. Although their clinical workload was similar they felt more resilient when surrounded by a supportive team, who were approachable and would assist the duty doctor if they were overloaded with work.

If you don’t have burnout, consider approaching your colleagues and asking them how they are doing. It could be the most meaningful ‘work’ you do today.

The RCGP have drawn together a range of resources to support GPs to maintain their wellbeing, which are available here: <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/training-exams/practice/gp-wellbeing.aspx>.

References

1. Fisher, R., Croxson, C., Ashdown, H. & Hobbs, R. (2017). GP views on strategies to cope with increasing workload: a qualitative interview study. *Br J Gen Pract.* 67(655): e148-e156.
2. Eley, E., Jackson, B., Burton, C. & Walton, E. (2018). Professional resilience in GPs working in areas of socioeconomic deprivation: a qualitative study in primary care. *Br J Gen Pract.* 68(677): e819-e825.

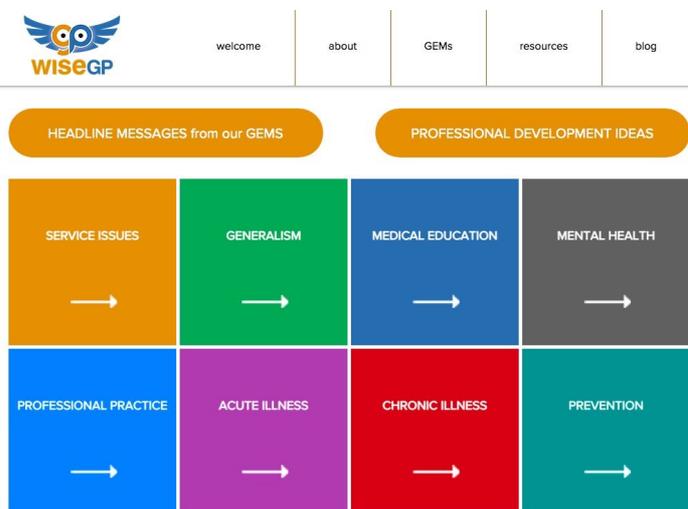
HIGHLIGHTS FROM WISEGP

GEMS Library

A GEM is General practice Evidence for Modern day practice.

Check out our GEMS library where recent research is summarised, offering you easy access to knowledge for everyday practice. You will also find ideas for professional development, inspired by research within the GEMS library.

<https://www.wisegp.co.uk/gem-library>



If you have research to submit to the GEMS library, please follow the link below!

<https://www.wisegp.co.uk/submit-a-gem>

Introducing our WiseGP podcasts...

Hosted by Wise Intern Johanna Reilly these are informal chats with practising clinicians and academics who have an interest in primary care scholarship and how they reflect that in their work. Available to download on our website and from several major podcast hosts please have a listen and let us know if you like it, and if you would like to be a guest or have any guest suggestions!



<https://www.wisegp.co.uk/podcast>

The first podcast features the WISE GP Interns, Johanna Reilly, Emily Lyness and Annabelle Machin.

Over a series of twelve newsletters we will be focussing on research addressing the top challenges currently facing general practice. If you haven't already, please sign up to receive regular WiseGP newsletters at <https://www.wisegp.co.uk/>.

In our next newsletter we will be focusing on how to support people with self-harm and suicidal thoughts...