

Gabi N. Waite, PhD; Mary, M. Pelkowski; David B. Averill, PhD
Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Scranton, PA, U.S.A

Introduction

During the past 5 years, physician burnout has been 60-75% greater than the general population.¹ Similarly, medical students report a higher percentage of burnout than their age-matched peers. For instance, when compared to college graduates aged 22-32, it was determined that medical students had a higher prevalence of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, depressive symptoms, general fatigue, and burnout.²

Some medical schools believe that they should teach medical students self-care and resilience as part of the curriculum to improve students' quality of life and reduce their risk of burnout in their careers. Other schools see their role in providing a lower stress academic environment to support students' wellness but keeping wellness activities outside of the curriculum.

This study looked at how many U.S. medical schools mention wellness or resilience programs on their openly accessible websites as part of the Curriculum or on Student Affairs sites. We determined if there is a difference between allopathic and osteopathic schools. Further, we rated the ease of finding this information.

Methods and Materials

Search Algorithm:

- The websites of allopathic and osteopathic schools (n=152 and 39, respectively) were obtained from the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM).
- The search was conducted in June and July of 2019 and was from freely accessible webpages only.
- Face pages, Curricular pages and Student Service/ Affairs websites were searched manually and using the site's search function.
- Data were collected in a binary form (yes or no) and are presented as percentages of total.
- Wellness, resilience, mindfulness programs on websites or course catalogues were included. Religious and spirituality programs were excluded.
- The mention of wellness or resilience in the mission statement or a newsfeed was monitored but not included in the data presented here.

Categorization for Ease of Access:

Easy	Moderate	Difficult
Information found on face pages or Curricular/ Student Affairs overview pages	Information required some digging and was more than 2 clicks away from introductory pages	Finding information required hunting and/or a thorough search

Results

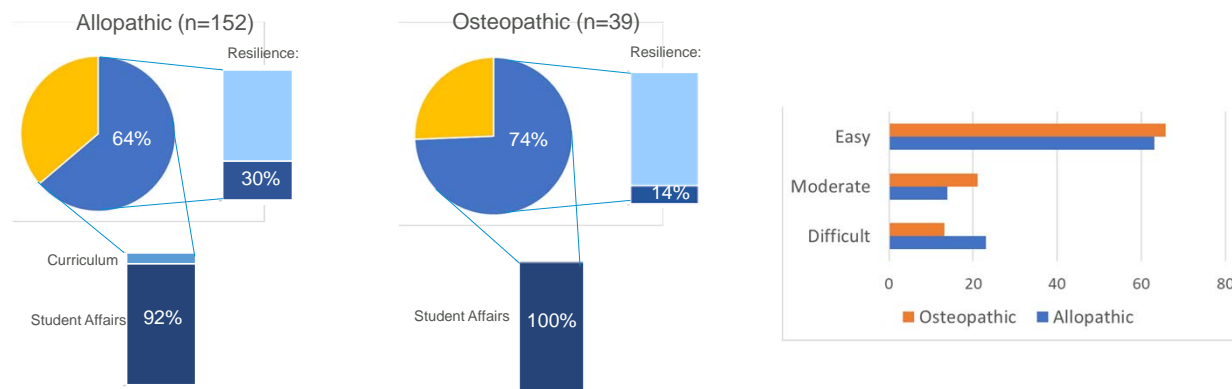


Fig 1: Wellness Information on Freely Accessible Websites of U.S. Medical Schools:

About 64% of allopathic and 74% of osteopathic schools provided information about wellness programs on their websites. Of these, 30% of allopathic and 14% of osteopathic schools identified enhancement of resilience as a specific goal. In osteopathic schools, all information was in Student Affairs. In allopathic schools, 8% of the wellness information was part of curricular sites.

Fig 2: Ease of Locating Information:

In allopathic schools, about 23% of the information on wellness was categorized as "difficult to find," versus 13% in osteopathic schools. When assigning the categories 'easy,' 'moderate' and 'difficult' a numeric value of 1, 2, and 3, respectively, average rating was 1.6 +/- 0.8 with no statistical difference between schools.

Discussion and Conclusion

- Most medical schools highlighted wellness programs on their websites. This finding aligns with initiatives of the AAMC and AACOM to enhance the wellness and resilience of medical students.
- Most programs were found on Student Affairs websites in comparison to accessible Curricular pages, indicating that most schools provide wellness opportunities voluntarily or as part of the hidden curriculum.
- The ease of finding detailed information on wellness and resilience suggests that medical schools have identified student burnout as an issue requiring attention.
- Only 2% of medical schools reported findings on the effectiveness of their wellness or resilience programs, indicating that overall the value of such programs for students remains unknown.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- Data collected represent only what has been made publicly available. Additional curricular information might be behind firewalls.
- Data provided here is subject to frequent change.
- The depth, size or length of the programs were not assessed.

Future Aims and Recommendation

While the Association of Medical Colleges lists "resilience and adaptability" as one of the 15 core competencies for entering medical students³, the percentage of students meeting this competency significantly decreases while being in medical school. Medical schools recognize the problem and offer wellness or resilience programs, but the scholarly assessment of these programs is small. → **We recommend more systematic and scholarly approaches to assess the success of medical schools in combating student burnout.**

Even less information is known about the premise that building resilience during medical school carries forward into the clinical professional life. → **We recommend higher education initiatives that fund and support longitudinal monitoring of wellness and resilience.**

References:

- Exploring Resilience: What do we know? Literature and data review workforce studies, Health Care Affairs, American Association of Medical Colleges. Retrieved from: https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2016/03/physician_resilient_and_medical_student_burnout.pdf
- Dyrbye, L.N, West, C.P., Satele, D., Boone, S., Tan, L., Sloan, J., and Shanafelt, T.D. (2014). Burnout Among U.S. Medical Students, Residents, and Early Career Physicians Relative to the General U.S. Population. *Academic Medicine: The Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, Vol. 89, (3), pp 443-451. Retrieved from: https://journals.hww.com/academicmedicine/fulltext/2014/03000/Burnout_Among_U.S._Medical_Students_Residents_25.aspx?pdf-link
- Dyrbye, L.N., Sciolla, A.F., Dekhtyar, M. et al. (2019). Medical School Strategies to Address Student Well-Being: A National Survey. *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 94(6), pp 861-868. Retrieved from https://journals.hww.com/academicmedicine/Fulltext/2019/06000/Medical_School_Strategies_to_Address_Student_45.aspx?pdf-link