

**WHAT**

National Physician Suicide Awareness Day

**WHEN**

September 17

**WHO**

Physicians, their colleagues and their loved ones

**WHERE**

Online and in person

**WHY**

Taking action on NPSA Day may save a life

**VISIT**

NPSADay.org

Background

Physician suicide was a crisis long before COVID-19. More than half of physicians know a physician who has either considered, attempted or died by suicide in their career. Now physicians have been in a non-stop crisis for more than a year, with COVID-19 inflicting serious psychological wounds upon them.

Left untreated, burnout could cause more cases of depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance use and suicidal thoughts in physicians. It's these physicians who are more likely to leave medicine, or worse, die by a preventable suicide death.

National Physician Suicide Awareness Day

National Physician Suicide Awareness Day (#NPSADay) is here to help everyone prevent physician suicide – including physicians, their colleagues and their loved ones. We need to come together and break down the culture of silence around physician mental health. It's a time to talk – and to act – so physicians' struggles don't become mental health emergencies.

Together, we can shift the paradigm from a system where physicians think that burnout, depression or suicidal thoughts are something they must overcome by themselves to one where they see the support system around them willing to help them seek mental health care. This can start today. Reach out and engage physicians, their colleagues, their loved ones or others in your network to join in recognizing #NPSADay.

How to Engage Others

- **Share Your Story:** Talking about your own experience is a great way to begin a conversation with others about mental health, while also breaking down stigma and creating a safe space.
- **Educate on Mental Health Care:** Share the [resources](#) available at NPSADay.org with physicians to arm them with the information and tools they may need to access mental health care services.
- **Amplify on Social Media:** Utilize the [NPSADay.org Toolkit](#) to spread the word far and wide by talking about the increasing rates of physician suicide across social media channels and use #NPSADay in your posts.

What You Can Do

The following are 5 evidence-based actions¹ physicians can do – and their loved ones and colleagues can encourage – to help prevent suicide.



1 Cultivate daily self-care habits by being curious about “how you tick” (i.e., take note of and practice the activities that lead to positive outcomes).



4 Do not assume that accomplished peers have it together and never struggle (i.e., check in on strong friends).



2 Realize that mental health is a dynamic part of human health, which means individuals can have some influence over their own mental health outcomes (e.g., staying on effective treatment for a recurrent pattern of depression or anxiety to positively affect mental health).



5 Learn how to have caring conversations, colleague to colleague, that invite deeper disclosure.



3 Look out for colleagues. Realize that subtle changes in behavior can be the “tip of the iceberg” indicating more significant struggles.



When dialoguing with a distressed colleague, **remember that with distress comes negative cognitive distortions**, so it is critically important to state the obvious—that you respect them, think well of them for getting help, are willing to help them connect with treatment, and will continue to be there for them. If you have struggled previously, you may have special empathy that you can marshal to help them understand they are not alone.

¹ Moutier, Christine Yu MD; Myers, Michael F. MD; Feist, Jennifer Breen JD; Feist, J. Corey JD, MBA; Zisook, Sidney MD Preventing Clinician Suicide: A Call to Action During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond, Academic Medicine: May 2021 - Volume 96 - Issue 5 - p 624-628. Accessed at https://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/Fulltext/2021/05000/Preventing_Clinician_Suicide_-_A_Call_to_Action.24.aspx.

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FIRST RESPONDERS FIRST

This document is intended for awareness-building and informational purposes only. If you need further guidance or are in a crisis, call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for free 24/7 support.