



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

Physicians have one of the highest suicide rates of any profession. More than half of physicians know a physician who has either considered, attempted or died by suicide in their career. Physicians are experiencing practice environments like they never have before—early physician retirement, health care worker shortages and a growing inequity experienced by patients. Understandably, this has taken a toll on their mental health and contributes to burnout rates.

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 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.
- **Encourage Mental Health Reflection:** Use the [Dear FutureDoc](#) resources to reflect on your mental health and wellbeing for personal encouragement, and share your hopes for future physicians.
- **Educate on Prevention Resources:** Share suicide prevention [resources](#) and programs available at NPSADay.org with physicians and health organizations.
- **Amplify on Social Media:** Utilize the [NPSADay.org Toolkit](#) to spread the word far and wide by talking about the physician suicide epidemic across social media channels and use #NPSADay in your posts.

What You Can Do

The following are six 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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This document is intended for awareness-building and informational purposes only.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org