

THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation in the media is evolving, focusing on youth, women, and the justice system. Last month, we took a look at how the telehealth landscape is changing as a result of COVID-19. This month, we examined healthcare worker burnout.

The diagram below illustrates the conversation on COVID-19 and healthcare worker burnout, drawing upon a sample of 2,700 news articles from April through June 2020. Takeaways include:

EHR systems: an underlying condition

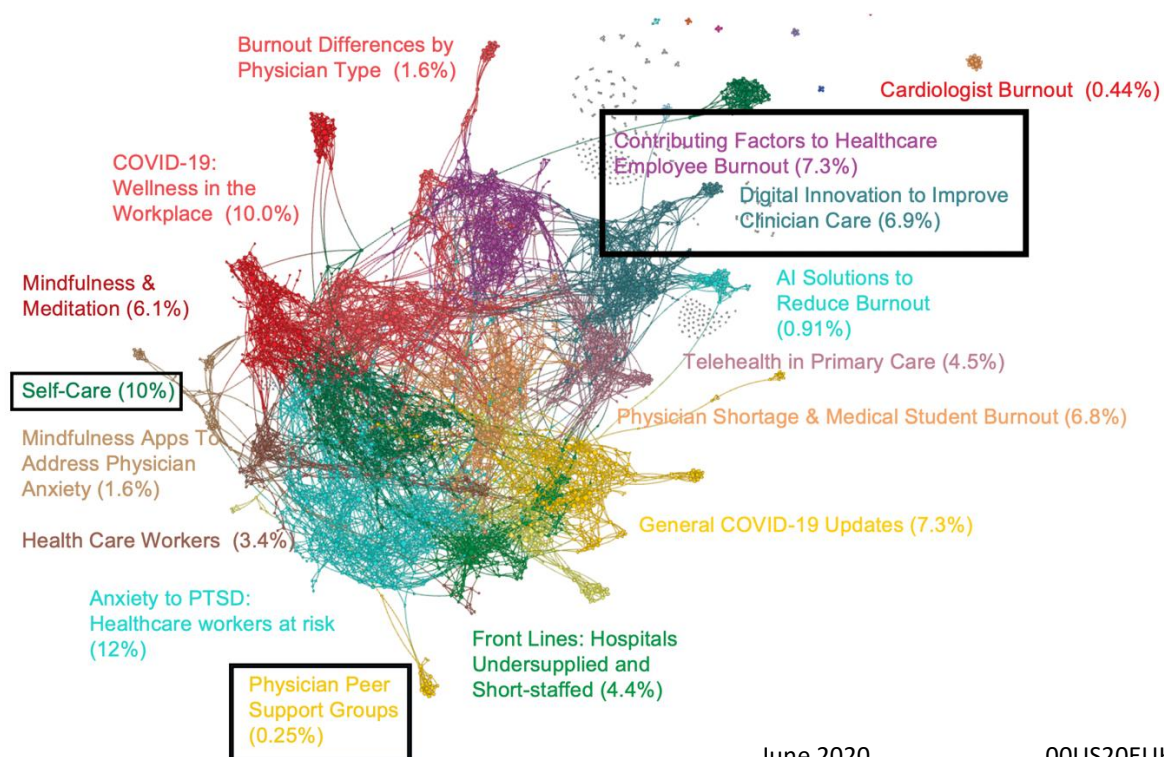
Concern for healthcare providers has been increasing since the arrival of COVID-19. But the problem of “burnout” predates the pandemic. A 2019 Medscape survey found that **40% of physicians** reported burnout. One **key driver** of this is the frustrating inoperability of Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems that increase administrative workload and interfere with a physician’s capacity to provide care to patients. For HCPs, the pandemic has not only made work more dangerous and multiplied patient caseloads. It has also exposed a **serious** operational flaw in the digitization of the healthcare system.

Self-care and peer support

How can healthcare workers practice self-care? The **Harvard Business Review** analyzed how healthcare workers can – and must – maintain emotional and cognitive balance in order to persevere and perform. Yet it is challenging for professionals trained to care for others to check in with themselves. Further, as the **American Medical Association** makes clear, the healthcare system has not fostered a culture of emotional wellness. One way to change that is for **medical credentialing entities** to encourage peer support groups, which promote openness among colleagues, validation of stress and negative feelings, and a deeper appreciation of the emotional component of patient care.

Healthcare Worker Burnout

April to June 2020



THOUGHT STARTERS

A roundup of thought-provoking pieces on mental health for youth, women, and the justice system.



Youth to G7 Leaders: Mental Health Matters!

In early June, the Y7 issued a communique to the G7 that “calls on the G7 leaders and the international community to hear the youth voice and take the Y7’s proposals into consideration as they develop and implement policies.” Mental health was among the top priorities articulated by the Y7 – along with climate change, human rights, cyber security, and police reform. The Y7 declared that the G7 should:

“Embed mental health education in school curriculums and offer free, preventative, personalized mental health support for young people where they live, learn and work.”

NEXUS collaborated with the Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health to elevate mental health on the Y7 agenda. As part of NEXUS, Dr. Rakesh Jain and MHA’s Theresa Nguyen spoke at the **YMentalHealth** global forum just prior to the communique’s release.



Women’s Mental Health: The Economic “Shecession”

The April report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and a subsequent analysis by the **National Women’s Law Center** revealed that women have been hit harder by layoffs and unemployment than men. The education and health sectors lost over 2.5 million jobs – and women accounted for 2.1 million, leading some to claim that the economy is experiencing a “shecession.” Past recessions have shown that increased unemployment can lead to higher instances of substance abuse and even suicide, as models from Texas-based **Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute** found:

“For every five percent increase in the unemployment rate, an unemployment on par with the 2007-2009 recession, over a year we could lose 4,000 more Americans to suicide...[and] 600,000 more people [might] suffer from addiction more broadly.”



The Justice System: Lessons from COVID-19

Last month the **Brookings Institution** featured a **webinar** examining how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people living with mental illness who are incarcerated. The panelists focused on the problems we face and sought to identify solutions:

- *To reduce the risk of spread, some jails and prisons across the U.S. are releasing nonviolent offenders.*
- *Panelists agreed there is a lack of uniformity in both testing and policies for jails and prisons.*
- *Dr. Jeffrey Allen, the medical director of the Bureau of Prisons, said in an **interview** that testing is in line with current CDC guidance and that officials are working daily to discover new strategies to slow the spread of the virus.*
- *A **Lancet article** was frequently cited, which argues that statistical models may be used to determine how many people in jails and prisons need to be released early to prevent outbreaks.*

THE PUNCHLIST



3 ways to take action on this month.

1

Read:

If you are interested in understanding why the healthcare system seems to breed burnout, TCTMD, an online hub for the Cardiovascular Research Foundation, published an **article** in early June that critically examines the issue – including how the personal qualities that make a selfless physician can be a long-term liability for mental health. We suggest queuing it up for your long weekend read.

2

Watch:

Healthline, a PBS production, is shining a light on the shared experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on society's collective mental health. This **28-minute video clip** discusses the importance of emotional resilience along with the silver linings of growth and gratitude that many could experience. Finally, it offers tactics that individuals can use to cope with stress and anxiety.

3

Listen:

As a result of recent protests against police brutality, critical discussions about race are at the forefront of nearly every American's mind. Licensed psychologist Dr. Joy Harden Bradford hosts a popular podcast, *Therapy for Black Girls*, that seeks to make mental health topics more accessible for Black women and girls. One of the show's first episodes, "**How Racism Impacts Our Mental Health,**" which was released in August 2017 shortly after the Charlottesville protests, remains relevant today for anyone interested in understanding the psychological toll of racism.

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