



Team Building for Internal Medicine Interns: Part of a Comprehensive Wellness Program

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Background

Medical residency has high rates of burnout nationally. In October 2017 our program of 124 was surveyed by GME. A response rate of 42% evaluated the following:

- Symptoms of *depression* – program 33% vs all programs in GME 35%
- *Burnout* – program 60% vs 59%
- *Perceived appreciation from the program was slightly below the mean for all programs.*

Our wellness program includes a wellness lecture series, social and athletic activities, snack baskets for our inpatient teams and has named faculty and residents as wellness champions. People identified as peer or faculty support for residents in distress.

Since many interns have left behind an established social support network we wanted to engage them with each other and expose them to something our community is famous for, rock climbing.

Objectives

- Evaluate intern satisfaction through post-activity survey and narrative comments
- Explore if these types of activities could lessen burnout
- Use narrative comments to help guide future activities

Methods

Design

- 55 Interns were divided into groups of 10-12
- Created a curriculum to relate rock climbing to medicine – problem solving, emotion regulation, asking for help, communication both verbal and non-verbal

Intervention

- Small groups each met once for 2.5 hours over 5 wks
- A climbing instructor taught the group belay skills
- Interns paired up with different partners throughout the activity to practice as climber and belayer
- Scheduled pauses throughout the activity for discussion, reflection, and stress relieving strategies

Results

Survey Results

- Attending this activity was worth my time 96%
- I want more types of these activities sponsored by the department 90%
- These activities are an important part of decreasing burnout 85%
- I would *highly* recommend this activity to others 90%

Narrative Comments

- “How quickly we could trust each other.”
- “Surprised how others had similar feelings of being overwhelmed at work.”
- “How much I bonded in such a short time!”
- “I feel valued.”
- “Others are going through the same thing.”

Conclusions

- Interns and leadership see value in this activity
- This program could serve as a springboard for connection leading to other wellness activities such as meals together, beer making, hiking, etc.
- Over time this activity, embedded within a comprehensive wellness program, may be protective against workplace burnout

Looking Ahead

- Change climbing activity from July to February to target time of year when interns are most at risk for depression and burnout
- Focus activity to go beyond team building and provide an opportunity for debrief and to share support strategies
- Include more Chief Medicine Residents, residents and committed faculty to participate

