



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Cultivating Connection to Combat Isolation and Burnout

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Physicians in all areas may face isolation and loneliness, with many showing signs of burnout and emotional exhaustion. We are connected to the physician and insurance networks by our computers and often work late hours, perhaps rushing home to an event for our families.

Meetings with peers and other staff meetings at hospitals have dwindled. In the past, these meetings tied us to managing issues of concern at hospitals and within our professional organizations. Other social constructs in the form of professional development and committee meetings also allow us to stay connected professionally to our peers. As we move towards making connections as a student, resident, or practicing physician, the ability to be a part of the conversations within our organizations, hospitals, and communities matters. It is difficult to designate time to meet on the outside after a busy day or to spend time on a meeting taking away from home duties.

ACOFPP can help by linking us with others in our profession and allowing us to discuss issues that are becoming more evident over the country. Community and professional volunteering can help us form new associations with people and gives our voices weight as we discuss health and other issues.

Related to this is our general community distance from others. This has been called an epidemic of loneliness and social isolation, noted by the Surgeon General. Developing stronger social connections with our communities, in our organization, and with our peers can alleviate the loneliness and burnout that we may experience with long work hours. One of the contributing factors to burnout can be feeling that our voices are not impactful. Joining conversations during meetings and with leadership from our organizations and hospitals can give us a voice to help ourselves, our patients, and our peers.

A few tips to avoid burnout, social isolation, and loneliness include attending a meeting with peers, joining a volunteer group or activity, and finding time to reconnect socially so that our voices can be heard. These activities are valuable in preventing depression and loss of autonomy.

Many of our patients could use similar advice from us. Adolescents can benefit from volunteering and working on community projects to help them stay connected and avoid social isolation. Elderly patients have so much to give when joining community projects.

As physician leaders in our communities, joining peers in committee work or attending a conference can help us stay connected and learn how our opinions matter. I look forward to hearing your ideas and stories of how you stay connected!