

# A Path Forward:

The Link Between Professional Fulfillment and Workplace Burnout

## Workplace Burnout

“a feeling of exhaustion, distress, and cynicism related to one’s job”<sup>1</sup>



## Professional Fulfillment

“a sense of engagement, reward, and contentment with one’s career”<sup>2</sup>

By definition alone, the conditions of “burned out” or “professionally fulfilled” are mutually exclusive states of being. This means that any organizational investment against burnout can also be leveraged toward improved professional fulfillment.

This should apply doubly in healthcare, where, as reported in the [State of Well-Being 2023](#) report, 83% of physicians agreed that the work they do is meaningful to them. In nurses, advanced practice providers, and pharmacy professionals, a similar overwhelmingly positive response has been shown.

## Measuring The Gap

The first step toward meaningful action is measuring how much of either condition an organization’s workforce may be experiencing. Validated tools like the Well-Being Index give leaders and organizations the data and strategy to guide action, combat burnout, increase fulfillment, and maximize professional well-being.

1. World Health Organization. (2022). ICD-11: International classification of diseases (11th revision). <http://id.who.int/icd/entity/129180281>

2. Fadare, O. O., Doucette, W. R., Gaither, C. A., Schommer, J. C., Arya, V., Bakken, B., Kreling, D. H., Mott, D. A., & Witry, M. J. (2021). Use of the Professional Fulfillment Index in Pharmacists: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis. *Pharmacy (Basel, Switzerland)*, 9(4), 158. <https://doi.org/10.3390/pharmacy9040158>

## Making Up The Difference

Individual and organizational interventions can quell burnout and spur professional fulfillment. A 2023 review of literature on workplace interventions to improve well-being and reduce burnout among health care professionals<sup>3</sup> published by the British Medical Journal found that 29 of 33 studies showed effective outcomes from workplace interventions utilizing coaching and mindfulness-based practices.

The benefits of organizational-level interventions on professional fulfillment have also been proven. A study examining how job resources can mitigate the burnout-inducing effects of job demands among U.S. pharmacists<sup>4</sup> made several findings that support the organizational interventions. Namely, job demands are positively associated with burnout, but when job resources are increased, burnout is quelled.

A 2023 study published by the National Kidney Foundation analyzed US dialysis personal care technicians. The study tracked burnout, professional fulfillment, and, crucially, turnover. Of the technicians studied, just over 52% intended to continue working in their profession. Organizational factors seemed to be major triggers:

“Important contributors to burnout and professional fulfillment included salary (66.5%), supervisor support (64.0%), respect from other dialysis staff (57.8%), sense of purpose about work (54.5%), and hours worked per week (52.9%)”<sup>5</sup>

**Key factors to burnout included peer and organizational support, electronic health record systems helpfulness, control over schedules, and personal factors like self-compassion and work appreciation.**

A similar 2022 study examining U.S. radiology trainees and their relationship to burnout, professional fulfillment, intention to leave, and sleep-related impairment used an electronic survey sent to 11 large academic medical centers, with 247 radiology residents responding. 36.2% reported burnout. The study associated burnout with reduced professional fulfillment:

“Key factors to burnout included peer and organizational support, electronic health record systems helpfulness, control over schedules, and personal factors like self-compassion and work appreciation.”<sup>6</sup>

It’s clear that organizational investment toward fostering a supportive work environment can both promote professional fulfillment and reduce burnout and the consequences of distress. Enacting systemic change to increase professional efficacy, maximize staff resources, and measure the impact of initiatives are crucial steps in promoting and maintaining workforce well-being.

3. Cohen, C., Pignata, S., Bezak, E., Tie, M., & Childs, J. (2023). Workplace interventions to improve well-being and reduce burnout for nurses, physicians and allied healthcare professionals: a systematic review. *BMJ open*, 13(6), e071203. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-071203>
4. Fadare, O. O., Doucette, W. R., Gaither, C. A., Schommer, J. C., Arya, V., Bakken, B. K., Kreling, D. H., Mott, D. A., & Witry, M. J. (2022). Exploring the moderating role of job resources in how job demands influence burnout and professional fulfillment among U.S. pharmacists. *Research in social & administrative pharmacy : RSAP*, 18(10), 3821–3830. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2022.04.003>
5. Plantinga, L. C., Rickenbach, F., Urbanski, M., Hoge, C., Douglas-Ajayi, C., Morgan, J. C., Bender, A. A., & Jaar, B. G. (2023). Professional Fulfillment, Burnout, and Turnover Intention Among US Dialysis Patient Care Technicians: A National Survey. *American journal of kidney diseases : the official journal of the National Kidney Foundation*, 82(1), 22–32.e1. <https://doi.org/10.1053/j.ajkd.2022.12.017>
6. Higgins, M. C. S. S., Siddiqui, A. A., Kosowsky, T., Unan, L., Mete, M., Rowe, S., & Marchalik, D. (2022). Burnout, Professional Fulfillment, Intention to Leave, and Sleep-Related Impairment among Radiology Trainees across the United States (US): A Multisite Epidemiologic Study. *Academic radiology*, 29 Suppl 5, S118–S125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2022.01.022>