

Pathways to Wellness: A Pilot Empowerment Program

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ABSTRACT

Physicians and advanced practice providers often lack structured opportunities to develop personal and professional skills, critical for reducing burnout and enhancing job satisfaction. To address this, Brown Medicine's Division of General Internal Medicine introduced the Personal Development Empowerment Series, a cost-effective faculty development initiative integrated into the existing schedule. The series includes sessions that focus on topics like imposter syndrome, assertiveness, and time management, blending education with interactive activities to promote practical application. Facilitated by psychologists and motivated peers, the lectures have been well received, with faculty appreciating its emphasis on reflection and cognitive-behavioral strategies. This replicable initiative fosters a supportive work culture, boosts morale, and highlights the importance of personal growth. This program demonstrates that affordable, home-grown interventions can significantly impact well-being and organizational culture.

KEYWORDS: personal development, burnout prevention

In medicine, significant emphasis is placed on acquiring medical knowledge and managing risk, yet there is limited support for physicians and advanced practice providers (APPs) to develop personal and professional skills. Building these skills can reduce burnout by enhancing job satisfaction, fostering a stronger professional identity, and reinforcing a sense of competency among physicians and medical educators. Research indicates that physicians who engage in coaching programs focused on personal development experience less emotional exhaustion and a greater sense of purpose. For example, a 2019 study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found that physicians who participated in a sponsored coaching program reported improvements in quality of life and resilience.¹ Similarly, a 2018 study in the *Annals of Family Medicine* highlighted that team-based care and skill-building programs contributed to increased work control among physicians, resulting in reduced burnout.²

While evidence supports the benefits of coaching programs, these are often systems-level interventions requiring significant resources, including skilled instructors, time,

Table 1. Faculty suggestions for personal development content

Faculty Topic Suggestions	Empowerment Series Sessions
Managing self-doubt	Imposter Syndrome
How to set boundaries	Avoiding People Pleasing
Assertive vs aggressive behavior	Assertiveness Training
How to improve time management	Taking Back Your Evenings
Growth mindset	Maintaining an Adaptive Practice
How to say no	
How to be efficient	

and funding. Recognizing the need to foster personal and professional growth in a more cost-effective manner, Brown Medicine's Division of General Internal Medicine developed the Personal Development Empowerment Series. This initiative was integrated into the existing faculty development schedule, occurring for one hour over lunch twice per month, maximizing faculty accessibility. Topics for the series were gathered from faculty via email and meeting discussions, then refined with input from the division's well-being committee (see **Table 1**). We are fortunate to have three psychologists within our division who volunteered to contribute to content creation and delivery, though many of the topics may be best delivered by motivated peers who can speak to best practices. Each session incorporates didactic components to educate faculty on common challenges and promote effective coping strategies, alongside interactive portions that address real-world scenarios.

The Personal Development Empowerment Series has been well received, with faculty expressing appreciation for the opportunity to explore these essential topics. Physician well-being is shaped by factors at both individual and systemic levels, and this series emphasizes cognitive and behavioral strategies that can be applied broadly. By providing protected time for self-reflection and growth, we aim to normalize these practices and highlight their importance. We are proud of this highly affordable initiative, which other divisions can easily replicate. Potential barriers include a shortage of knowledgeable speakers in certain areas and scheduling challenges.

Faculty development programs that highlight reflective practice, work-life balance, and career planning have shown significant positive impacts on well-being and job

satisfaction.³ By addressing providers' holistic needs, division-sponsored development programs foster a supportive work environment, boosting morale and promoting a positive organizational culture. We are committed to continuing this series within our division and supporting the ongoing development and well-being of our faculty.

References

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