

NIHR Greater Manchester PSTRC

Plain English Publication Summary

Publication: [Associations of physician burnout with career engagement and quality of patient care: systematic review and meta-analysis](#)

Publication details (Vancouver format)

Hodkinson A, Zhou, A, Johnson J, Geraghty K, Riley R, Zhou A et al. Associations of physician burnout with career engagement and quality of patient care: systematic review and meta-analysis BMJ 2022; 378:e070442
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What are the most important findings/conclusions in this paper? Why are they important?

This was the largest systematic review and meta-analysis (a way of using statistics to analyse findings from multiple studies) to assess the links between burnout and career engagement of physicians, as well as the quality of patient care. It summarises results from 170 observational studies with 239,246 physicians.

Physicians with burnout are up to four times more likely to be dissatisfied with their job and more than three times as likely to have thoughts or intentions to leave their job, or to regret their career choice. They are also twice as likely to be involved in patient safety incidents and show low professionalism, and over twice as likely to receive low satisfaction ratings from patients.

Moving forward, strategies to monitor and improve physician burnout are needed to help retain the healthcare workforce and improve the quality of patient care.

What did you do?

We did a systematic review and meta-analysis to examine the links between physicians' burnout and their career engagement, focusing on:

- job satisfaction
- career choice regret
- career development
- productivity loss and turnover intention
- the quality of patient care focusing on patient safety incidents
- low professionalism
- patient satisfaction.

Why did you conduct this research?

Looking at the links between physician burnout, the career engagement of physicians and the quality of care provided to patients all at the same time was important. This is because these elements have an impact on the overall efficiency of healthcare organisations, according to existing theoretical frameworks and research evidence. Information about these links needs to be made available to governments and policy organisations to encourage financial investments and policies to help avoid physician burnout internationally. No previous systematic reviews had taken this approach, which is why we did this meta-analysis.

What was known before your paper was published?

A meta-analysis published in 2022 that assessed the links between burnout with self-reported medical errors among physicians found an increased risk of self-reported errors. Two further systematic reviews assessed the links between physician or healthcare professionals' wellbeing and burnout with patient safety. But they did so using a non-meta-analysis approach as a number of factors were involved. So a larger meta-analysis that took these factors into account was urgently needed.

What is next? What is the potential impact of the work in this paper? What will change as a result of this paper (or the study it describes)?**What's next?**

The NIHR has awarded funding to carry out an analysis to assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving the well-being and retention of health professionals in primary care.

Impact of work?

The review has already been featured in mainstream media outlets (The Guardian, Independent, ITV News), interviews (LBC News), podcasts (BMJ Evidence), editorials (JAMA, BMJ) and government policy (House of Commons: Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care).

What will change?

We hope there will be better investment into interventions that can help organise and schedule physicians' workloads, which will help to reduce physician burnout.

Does this paper link in to a particular study / project? If so, please summarise the study and explain how this paper has improved understanding, or will move the study forward.

This study is the first to look jointly at the links between burnout and the career engagement of physicians, while also presenting how this relationship may have an impact on the quality of patient care.