

## Overcoming Burnout

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1 Hour Course

### Description:

Burnout is real and being talked about more and more in all health professions. We will examine burnout, including what it is, how to recognize it, prevent it, and navigate the pressures of practice.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the primary factors, according to recent studies, that contribute to burnout among healthcare professionals.
- Recognize the signs of burnout and how affect you and your practice
- Identify ways to prevent and navigate life so as to not succumb to the pressure patient care can bring

### Outline:

- What is burnout? **(5 min)**
  - Define burnout using WHO's classification:
    - Emotional exhaustion
    - Depersonalization (detachment from patients/colleagues)
    - Reduced sense of accomplishment
- Why healthcare professionals, and optometrists, are at high risk: **(10 min)**
  - Increasing patient loads
  - Administrative burden (EHRs, insurance paperwork)
  - Repetitive tasks + high responsibility (vision outcomes directly affect quality of life)
  - Isolation in solo or small practices
  - Decision fatigue
  - Long hours with minimal breaks
  - Strain of constant near work
  - Balancing clinical care with retail/business aspects (optical sales, staffing, competition)
  - High patient expectations (e.g., "fix my vision instantly")
- Studies have looked at burnout **(10 min)**
  - Insights into burnout among optometrists in the United States (Abbott et al., 2025) Ocular Wellness & Nutrition Society+3PubMed+3PMC+3

- Occupational stress, burnout and job satisfaction among optometrists in Spain: A cross-sectional study (Alvarez-Peregrina et al., 2025) PubMed
  - Resilience and Its Associated Factors in Optometry Students (Lim et al., 2025)
  - Burnout among Faculty Members in Optometric Education (Hobbs et al.)
  - Burnout Trends Among US Health Care Workers (VHA) (Mohr et al., 2025) JAMA Network
  - Systematic Review of Predictors of Burnout among U.S. Healthcare Providers (Factors Impacting Burnout in Optometry/Systematic review) ResearchGate
- **Warning signs to watch for: (5 min)**
    - Irritability with staff or patients
    - Dreading clinic days
    - Physical symptoms: headaches, eye strain, poor sleep
    - Declining clinical performance or empathy
- **Consequences of Burnout (5 min)**
    - For the practitioner: Mental health decline, substance misuse risk, career dissatisfaction, higher attrition.
    - For the practice: Staff turnover, lower productivity, patient dissatisfaction, medical errors.
    - For patients: Reduced empathy, missed diagnoses, rushed care.
- **Strategies to Navigate Burnout (10 min)**
    - ◆ Individual Strategies
      - Protect basics: sleep, nutrition, exercise.
      - Micro-breaks during the clinic day (20-20-20 rule for eye health and mental reset).
      - Mindfulness & stress-reduction techniques (deep breathing, journaling).
      - Setting boundaries: learning to say *no* to overload.
    - ◆ Practice-Level Strategies
      - Adjust clinic flow: build buffer time for admin and breaks.
      - Delegate effectively — empower technicians and staff.
      - Use technology wisely (templates, automation, AI scheduling).
      - Foster a culture where staff can discuss workload without stigma.
    - ◆ Systemic / Professional Strategies
      - Advocacy for fair reimbursement and reduced administrative burdens.
      - Peer support networks — local optometry associations, mastermind groups.
      - Mentorship and collaboration rather than competition.

- **Practice resilience (5 min)**
  - Burnout can be reversed with recognition and action.
  - View self-care as patient care — a healthier clinician delivers safer, better care.
  - Implement “sustainable practice design”: aligning patient care, business goals, and clinician well-being. – It’s a marathon, not a sprint with our profession.
  
- **In summary (5 min)**
  - Burnout is common and real in optometry.
  - Recognizing early signs is crucial.
  - Small, consistent strategies can restore joy in practice.
  
- **Questions and Final Discussion (5 min)**