Management of Stress and Physician Wellness

Elizabeth C. Dykhouse

University of Massachusetts Medical School

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Management of stress and Physician Wellness

Elizabeth C. Dykhouse, PhD
Director of Behavioral Science, Worcester Family Medicine Residency
Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health,
University of Massachusetts Medical School
Agenda

• 45-60 minutes recorded lecture
  • Review of the stress reaction
    • Discussion
  • Management of patient stress
    • Discussion
  • Physician wellness
    • Discussion

• 45-60 minutes for discussion
  • Questions
  • Case examples and consultation
Review of the stress response
Quiz!
The stress response involves both the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous system.

• **Sympathetic nervous system**
  • “Fight or flight”
  • Arousal of the system

• **Parasympathetic nervous system**
  • “Rest and digest”
  • Calming
  • Conserves energy
Stress response

- Amygdala
  - Contributes to emotional processing

https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response
Stress response

- Adrenal glands and Epinephrine
  - Heart rate increases
  - Blood pressure increases
  - Breathing becomes more rapid
    - Extra oxygen is sent to the brain
  - Release of glucose and fats from storage

https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response
What health conditions might this impact?
Health conditions impacted by stress

Physical health
• Hypertension
• Diabetes
• Chronic pain
• Headaches
• Gastrointestinal problems
• Sexual functioning
• Immune response

Mental/Social health
• Anxiety
• Depression
• Substance use
• Anger/irritability
• Family dynamics
### Common effects of stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On your body</th>
<th>On your mood</th>
<th>On your behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Overeating or undereating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle tension or pain</td>
<td>Restlessness</td>
<td>Angry outbursts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest pain</td>
<td>Lack of motivation or focus</td>
<td>Drug or alcohol misuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
<td>Tobacco use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in sex drive</td>
<td>Irritability or anger</td>
<td>Social withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach upset</td>
<td>Sadness or depression</td>
<td>Exercising less often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sleep problems**


[https://www.healthline.com/health/stress/effects-on-body#1](https://www.healthline.com/health/stress/effects-on-body#1)
Questions?
Management of patient stress
Management of patient stress

• Problem solving logistical factors
  • Financial
  • Family
  • Comorbid conditions and medical treatment
  • Education
  • What else??

• Healthy nervous system
  • Long-term
    • Exercise
    • Diet
  • More short-term
    • Relaxation response (parasympathetic nervous system response)
What is the Relaxation Response?

• First think about teaching patient about “fight or flight” response and how that might apply to their particular condition (pain, anxiety, etc.)

• Helps to activate parasympathetic nervous system “the calming system”

• Opposite effect from the sympathetic nervous system, allowing the body to “rest and digest”
How might you explain the stress response to a patient?
What Changes?

• The relaxation response causes:
  • Decreased oxygen demand
  • Lowered heart rate
  • Lowered blood pressure
  • Lowered respiratory rate
What Changes?

• The relaxation response causes:
  • Decreased oxygen demand
  • Lowered heart rate
  • Lowered blood pressure
  • Lowered respiratory rate

• Does not change situational sources of stress, does not remove logistical challenges
  • But it is a part of the response that we can have some control over
Expanding your Toolbox as a Provider

• Relaxation strategies allow you to influence your patients with words
  • Can be a way to focus on relationship building

• Represents a way of stress relief that is easily adaptable and suitable in inpatient setting and at home

• Increases self-care and self-efficacy for patients

• Best to teach them and encourage patient to practice so they can help themselves
What Can This Help With?

• Pain
• Anxiety
• Childbirth
• IBS
• Migraines
• Tension
• Sleep
• COPD
• Anything else?
Diaphragmatic or Belly Breathing

• Sit or lie in a comfortable position, legs shoulder width apart, eyes closed, jaw relaxed, arms loose.
• Place one hand on your chest, one hand on your stomach.
• Try to breathe so that only your stomach rises and falls. Breathe with your nose only.
  • Inhale: Concentrate on keeping your chest relatively still. Imagine you are trying to hold up a pair of pants that are slightly too big.
  • Exhale: Allow your stomach to fall as if you are melting into your chair/bed. Repeat the word “calm” to provide focus as you are practicing the exercise.
• Take several deep breaths moving only your stomach in and out with the breath. Match the length of you inhale to the length of your exhale (or double it), 4 or 3 seconds inhale, and 6 seconds exhale
• Practice 3-5 minutes daily until the breathing feels comfortable.
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

• Tighten and then relax muscle groups moving from feet up to face
• Check in advance for problems with cramping or pain
• Emphasis on noticing the relaxed state
• Can also do a body scan and just focus on relaxing each muscle group from feet to face
Imagery

- Often used in combination with diaphragmatic breathing
- Warn to avoid when driving
- Work with patient to identify their preference

- Pleasant imagery
  - Go to a relaxing place in your mind, describe everything you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell
  - Use all 5 senses to envision your comfortable and peaceful scene

- Pain control
  - We know that mental focus on pain can lead to increased pain, so focusing on it in an intentional way can also bring relief
  - Imagine pain as “red-hot” turning to “blue-cool,” or a muscle “knot” working its way out to a “smooth line”
Distraction and Mindfulness Techniques

• Focal Point Technique
  • Focus on one point in a room (e.g., painting, bookshelf, etc.)
  • Describe the image to yourself in detail (e.g., colors, how many books, etc.)
  • Talk to yourself about that one spot
  • Breathe!

• 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 - grounding using 5 senses (5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste) – can modify this in different ways

• Counting
  • In your imagination: count and imagine each number in order on a contrasting background
  • In a room: Count tiles on a ceiling, freckles on your arm, or the number of blue objects in a room
Advanced counseling techniques

• Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Thoughts

Behavioral/Situation

Emotions/stress level

Physical sensations
Discussion/Questions
Physician wellness

...why is it important?
Physician wellness

• You are subject to the stress response as well
  • Importance of caring for physical and mental health

• Coping with day-to-day stress of practicing medicine
• In addition to physical and mental health, stress impacts performance
• Impact on patient care
Yerkes-Dodson Law

A graph showing the relationship between stress and performance. The graph has a curve that peaks at a moderate level of stress, indicating that performance is highest at this point. As stress increases beyond this level, performance decreases.
Physician burnout

• Characterized by...
  • Emotional exhaustion
  • Depersonalization (negative or detached feelings towards patients)
  • Sense of reduced accomplishment in day-to-day work

• Consequences for patient care
  • Increased medical errors
  • Reduced patient satisfaction
  • Efficiency

What challenges do you face?
What strategies do you use to cope with the stress of work?
Questions/Discussion