Physician, Heal Thyself?
*Living the Mission in Catholic Health Care by Addressing Physician Wellness*

May 24, 2016

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**Desire for Spiritual Growth**

Joyce Rupp

Gift of Mercy and Understanding,
all my good intentions
for spiritual growth
go sliding down the gutter
of responsibilities.
All my hopes
of deepening prayer
get splintered and broken
in the chaos of busyness.
All my desires
to have a quiet haven
are swallowed
by the jaws of my calendar.
All my resolutions
to rise earlier, to pray longer,
are lost in the blankets
of an extra hour of sleep.
And all the while
I fuss and fume about this,
you look at me and smile.
Are you sending the message
that spiritual growth can happen
among the very things
that seem to keep me from you?
Are you assuring me
that my desire to grow
is not lost to you?
Jill Kruse, DO, is a full time family practice physician with Avera Medical Group in Brookings, S.D., and the medical director for the Avera LIGHT program for physician burnout and wellness. She is a 2016 CHA Tomorrow’s Leaders award recipient, an award she will receive at the 2016 Catholic Health Assembly in June. She also is a graduate of the 2014-15 Avera Physician Leadership Academy, and participant in the Avera Practicing Excellence Project. She has given talks about physician burnout and wellness at multiple state and national conventions, as well as interviews for TV and news publications. Previously, Dr. Kruse served as the chief of staff at St. Michael’s Hospital in Tyndall, S.D. Her residency training was at the University of Wisconsin Baraboo – Rural Training Track, and her medical school training was at Des Moines University – College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery.

Steve Tappe, MTS, is vice president of mission for the Avera Medical Group. His responsibilities include mission and values integration for Avera’s nearly 200 outpatient clinics and 900 employed physicians and APP’s. He meets regularly with providers, clinic leaders and staff and engages them on rediscovering the meaning in our work, spirituality in medicine and living the mission. He is a member of the steering committee for Avera’s LIGHT program, which implements system-wide efforts to promote physician well-being and prevent burnout. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy from Carroll College in Helena, Mont., and a master of theological studies degree from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass.
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Medical Director, Avera LiGHT Program  
Steve Tappe, MTS  
VP of Mission, Avera Medical Group

Objectives

- Describe the mission leader role in physician well-being  
- Name strategies to help physicians recapture meaning in their work  
- Recognize six main factors leading to physician burnout  
- State the purpose of a physician wellness program  
- List practical steps for creating a physician wellness program
The Mission of Catholic Health Care

• Our mission is to bring about the Kingdom of God
• The Kingdom can be thought of as “the way God wants the world to be”
• This includes
  – Special concern for the poor and marginalized
  – Justice, mercy, restoring right relationships
  – Recognizing the dignity of each human person
  – Holistic Care, caring for body, mind and soul
Avera’s Mission

• Avera is a health ministry rooted in the Gospel. Our mission is to make a positive impact in the lives and health of persons and communities by providing quality services guided by Christian values.
• Making a positive impact is not only for patients, it also regulates how we interact with and treat one another as leaders, employees and colleagues
• Recognizing one another as whole persons is one of the ways we do this

Whole-Physician Care

• We often discuss with our physicians the importance of whole-person care, recognizing that patients are more than a disease or diagnosis
  – “Illness grasps persons by the soul and by the body and disturbs them both.” (Is Medicine a Spiritual Practice? Daniel P. Sulmasy Academic Medicine, Vol. 74, No 9/Sep. 1999, p.1003)
• As organizations, do we recognize this same reality in our physicians?
• Physicians too are spiritual persons, they make mistakes, they suffer, they seek meaning in their work
Where is the Meaning?

- After 11 years (minimum) of training, this is what physicians often face:
  - imperfect EMR
  - difficult patients
  - bad outcomes
  - massive student loan debt
  - difficult revenue goals
  - quality metrics, moving targets
  - loss of control
- Is this the rest of my life?

Mission Leader Role

- As mission leaders, how can we help?
  - It’s all about the relationship
  - Spend time with your docs; get to know them
  - Know – Like - Trust
  - Be credible; you have expertise that physicians don’t
  - Be not afraid - Doctors are not scary people
  - Don’t let your first encounter be one of discipline!
Mission Leader Role

• As mission leaders, how can we help?
  – Understand the difficulties of practicing medicine today
  – Emphasize the meaningful things they do everyday
  – Connect to purpose: how does the reality of practice match their expectation?
  – Help them connect spiritually with their vocation
  – Help them connect spiritually with their patients

Strategies to Recapture Meaning

• Take time to reflect
  – Everyone is busy, but when an organization takes time to reflect on meaningful work, it sends a powerful message
• Where one or two are gathered. . .
  – Discuss mission at service lines, department meetings and medical staff meetings
• Name the difficulties, but emphasize the good things
  – Physicians make a difference every day, but this can become lost in the midst of the difficult stuff
Strategies to Recapture Meaning

• Reward and Recognize
  — Doctor’s Day, thank you cards, spouse/loved one appreciation

• Focus on the meaning-full stuff
  — Schwartz Rounds, Finding Meaning in Medicine groups, Retreats etc.

• Can control vs. Can’t control
  — Usually the difficult parts of our work are those we have no control over (EMR, time, drug-seeking behavior, etc.)

Strategies to Recapture Meaning

• Start small
  — Your time will be limited initially, leave them with a solid takeaway

• Take a long view
  — Depending on your scope of responsibility, it may take years before culture change and personal transformation occur

• Plant seeds
  — We don’t always see the fruits of our labor – be okay with this
Thank you!

Questions?

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Physician Leader Forum
October 3-5, 2016
Worthington Renaissance Hotel
Fort Worth, Texas