

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

p. 3 Training the next generation of caregivers

p. 4 Pursuing the benefits of clinically integrated networks

p. 5 Touching the lives of our friends and neighbors

Change-ready and resilient: Ensuring a health system meets the needs of today and tomorrow

Improving physician wellness to improve quality of care

By 2025, demand for physicians will exceed supply by a range of **46,000 to 90,000**, according to a 2015 study by the Association of American Medical Colleges.

What does that mean for physicians? Many feel emotionally exhausted and ineffective from a higher caseload. That's not good for their patients, their profession, their families or for themselves.

Burnout has been a hot topic in healthcare for years. In 2012, the **Archives of Internal Medicine published a study** that evaluated the physician burnout rate and looked at work-life balance over three years. Researchers then compared the physician burnout rate to the general population. They concluded burnout is more common among physicians, especially those in primary care and emergency medicine.

At Novant Health, it became clear that the increasing demand for physicians and higher rates of physician burnout threatened the organization's ability to consistently deliver quality care and maintain a healthy physician workforce. To address these concerns, Tom Jenike, MD, senior vice president and chief human experience officer for Novant Health, worked with Nicholas Beamon of **OneTeam Leadership** to establish a physician resiliency program, which helps physicians achieve better work-life balance; develop leadership skills; up their engagement, resiliency and wellness; and find more fulfillment in their professional and personal lives.

"Developing a program focused around physician wellness, resiliency and leadership helps to establish a system that is able to generate new ideas, engagement and behaviors that advance the mission of quality care for communities and patients," said Jenike. "Novant Health's program is focused on self-awareness to help doctors better understand their own pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It helps them see more clearly what

Change-ready and resilient: Ensuring a health system... continued

they value most and reclaim why they initially chose the profession — both of which can help them cope better with the mounting pressures on today's physicians. The program completely focuses on the individual, not the system."

Steven Gilchrist, MD, a family medicine physician with **Novant Health Blakeney Family Physicians** in Charlotte, North Carolina, participated in Novant Health's six-month physician resiliency program, which includes a multiday wellness retreat, one-on-one coaching, mentoring program and single-session wellness seminars.

"Beginning with residency, physicians are trained to be super humans. We're taught that physical and mental toughness are essential elements of a good physician so exerting ourselves becomes the norm as we establish our own medical practices," said Gilchrist. "I was initially skeptical of the physician resiliency program because mentally, I was unaware that I wasn't truly connecting with my patients or team members."

The physician resiliency program provided Gilchrist with the tools to establish authentic relationships with his patients and team members. It helped him understand the importance of prioritizing his own health and wellness so that he can provide better care to his patients. These skills also carried over to his personal life, improving the quality of his relationships with family and friends.

"The program made me realize that I wasn't truly getting to know my patients. I was also not mentally available to my wife and children, even if I was physically present with them," Gilchrist said. "I now make sure I am fully present when at work and when at home. I had no idea how this could positively impact the way I practice medicine. Patient satisfaction has improved, they have fewer questions after their appointments, and even the mood in the office has become less stressful. I've regained my love of seeing patients. Each one has become a gift."

Novant Health launched its physician resiliency program in May 2013. Since that time it has helped over 500 Novant Health physicians regain their commitment to the pursuit of medicine. In fact, in a 2015 survey of Novant Health clinic and acute care physicians, those who participated in the program scored 50 percent higher than nonparticipants on measures such as personal fulfillment, alignment with Novant Health's mission and vision, and engagement and positive attitudes toward the organization.

The program is also having a secondary impact on other clinical and acute care providers that work alongside those physician leaders who participated in the program — many of which have also identified ways to improve their overall wellness. As a result, today, Novant Health's medical group, which includes over 1,300 physicians, ranks in the 86th percentile nationally in engagement.

As hospital systems across the country overhaul their operations to meet the demands of a new healthcare landscape, physician burnout is an issue that cannot be ignored. With one of the largest medical groups in the United States, Novant Health is making strides to reduce the implications associated with physician burnout and establish a higher quality of care for patients.

Training the next generation of caregivers

Primary care physicians are in high demand and that will continue to grow as the aging population increases. In fact, according to a **study** in the *Annals of Family Medicine*, the total number of office visits to primary care physicians is projected to increase from 462 million in 2008 to 565 million in 2025.

The problem is compounded by an aging population. Medicare enrolls 10,000 baby boomers every day, and the current group of family medicine physicians is at or near the age of retirement. As a result, the need for more primary care providers is great.

Establishing a strong primary care system has other community benefits as well.

According to a report by the **American Academy of Family Physicians**; "Countries with stronger primary care systems are associated with improved population healthcare, including reductions in all-cause mortality, all-cause premature mortality, and cause-specific mortality from a number of acute and chronic conditions. Primary care is associated with better health outcomes through improved effectiveness and efficiency of care, with improved equity."

Novant Health is doing its part to establish a strong primary care system and stem the shortfall of primary care providers who serve on the front lines of keeping our communities well.

On July 1, 2016, the first class of resident physicians began its three-year extensive training in family medicine at the Novant Health Family Residency Clinic in Cornelius, North Carolina. The class of four female and two male providers will complete the training with rotations in community clinics as well as at Novant Health Huntersville Medical Center, Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center and Novant Health Hemby Children's Hospital.

The Novant Health residency program team created the patient-centered curriculum to develop practitioners who are committed to providing comprehensive and compassionate care for all members of the family.

"Our state and country so desperately need well-trained primary care physicians who can provide care with compassion and confidence," said David Cook, MD, senior vice president of population health at Novant Health.

A **Canadian study** found that about half of family medicine residents stayed in the region where they did their residency program. Novant Health hopes this will be true of participants in its program.

After the three-year rotations, they hope to fill Novant Health positions with physician leaders well trained in value-based care who understand and embody the Novant Health culture.

The Novant Health Family Medicine Residency Clinic has been several years in the making. In early 2014, Novant Health's President and CEO Carl S. Armato signed a commitment letter.

The health system was officially accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education in October 2015. The following month, it was also granted accreditation from the American Osteopathic Association. This gives Novant Health dual accreditation to train family medicine residents who have graduated from M.D. and D.O. medical schools.

As the healthcare industry transitions to a value-based care system, it is important now more than ever that an appropriate infrastructure be established to foster healthier communities. By creating and offering family medicine residency programs, Novant Health and other healthcare systems across the country are achieving this goal.

Pursuing the benefits of clinically integrated networks

Patients, government agencies and insurance providers are demanding that healthcare organizations be accountable for providing higher quality care at a lower price. To achieve this goal, healthcare systems and independent providers are turning to clinical integration networks (CIN) to position themselves for success.

The Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission define CIN as “an active and ongoing program to evaluate and modify practice patterns by CIN participants to create interdependence among physicians to control costs and ensure quality patient care.” Simply put, CIN allows healthcare providers to more effectively coordinate the care of patients so that they can improve the value of care provided, including reducing healthcare costs or redundancies in care.

Today, **over 500** clinically integrated networks are in the United States.

To improve collaboration among physicians in the markets it serves, Novant Health recently launched the Novant Health Clinically Integrated Network (NHCIN). This statewide North Carolina physician network is designed to deliver high-quality patient outcomes and improved patient access at a lower cost.

“The creation of the NHCIN is just one initiative underway at Novant Health to transition the healthcare delivery system from fee-for-service to a value-based care model,” said Carl S. Armato, president and CEO of Novant Health. “At Novant Health, we believe that collaboration among all healthcare providers will improve patient satisfaction and the health of our communities, while reducing the cost of healthcare. It is just one more way we are able to provide high-quality care in all communities we serve.”

Collectively, members of the network will develop clinical pathways and protocols, create improved systems for care, share and analyze clinical outcomes data, and determine the most efficient way to deliver high-quality, affordable patient care. NHCIN members will also be able to provide consumers with greater continuity of care through increased clinical data sharing, including improved access to specialty care and timeliness for sharing test results and other clinical information among the patient’s preferred healthcare providers.

NHCIN is co-led by William Caldwell, MD, senior vice president for clinical integration at Novant Health and an independent otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat) specialist in Charlotte, North Carolina; David Cook, MD, a family medicine physician with Novant Health Lakeside Family Physicians; and a board of directors made up of both independent and Novant Health physicians from across North Carolina.

“As physicians, it is our responsibility to strive to improve the health of our communities and provide care to individuals that is high quality, safe, patient-centered and affordable,” said Caldwell. “As the healthcare industry continues to transition to a value-based model of care, collaboration among healthcare providers is imperative to identifying and adopting evidence-based best practices at a lower cost.”

Today, a CIN program is the most effective way to create the incentives, management and infrastructure healthcare systems need to improve care quality and efficiency.

More than half of all healthcare spending is deemed wasteful spending, and clinical and operational inefficiencies are two of the most significant contributors, according to a **report** by PricewaterhouseCoopers’ Health Research Institute. Furthermore, one-third of healthcare spending can be attributed to unnecessary hospitalizations, redundant tests, unproven treatment and excessive end-of-life care because the approach to care may vary by physicians.

Pursuing the benefits of clinically integrated networks continued

CIN has the means to establish better coordinated care, enforce practice guidelines, standardize procedures, employ cost-control measures and drive quality improvement. It is the next step toward establishing a higher quality of care at the lowest possible price.

Touching the lives of our friends and neighbors

A woman without insurance coverage for mammograms visited a Novant Health breast clinic at the Winston-Salem Rescue Mission and got the screening she needed — free of charge. A teacher attended a Novant Health weight loss and nutrition program and credits it for her healthier weight, lower blood pressure and blood glucose levels. A man had no idea he had diabetes — until he participated in a Novant Health community screening.

They were just a few of our friends and neighbors whose lives have been touched by Novant Health's commitment to improving the health of our communities. Click [here](#) to view our latest community benefit report and see how Novant Health invested in the health and well-being of our states, cities and neighborhoods in 2015.

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Novant Health experts are available for more information on these and other topics.

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