

Partnering with a pharmacist may decrease burnout among primary care providers

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More than 50 percent of physicians experience burnout, which can lead to increased depression and higher rates of suicide; poor patient outcomes; and increases in medical errors. One suggested path toward reducing the rate of burnout has been to examine how teamwork can improve satisfaction on primary care teams.

In a recently published study in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, a University of Minnesota-led research team researchers interviewed primary care providers (PCPs)—including physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants—to learn how the inclusion of pharmacists in primary care clinics impacts PCPs' clinical work, professional satisfaction and [burnout](#).

Pharmacists in participating clinics provide a defined service called comprehensive medication management (CMM). Through CMM, all medications are assessed to ensure appropriateness, safety, and that they meet desired goals and can be taken as prescribed.

Kylee Funk, lead author and an assistant professor

at the College of Pharmacy, Twin Cities, notes the research team found that PCPs described the pharmacist as a collaborative partner and a professional who contributes a complementary knowledge and skill set.

When pharmacists are embedded in a clinical team, PCPs experienced improvement in work-life aspects:

- decreased workload;
- satisfaction patients are receiving better care;
- reassurance;
- decreased mental exhaustion;
- enhanced professional learning;
- increased provider access;
- achievement of quality measures.

These seven themes identified in the study center around how the pharmacist improved PCP work-life—which includes clinical work and professional satisfaction—were aligned with drivers of burnout previously documented in academic literature.

"As a [medical community](#), we are very concerned about burnout," said Funk. "Our findings are promising for healthcare leaders who are seeking solutions to decrease burnout and improve joy in work. It is exciting to identify that working with a pharmacist may offer very important benefits for clinicians."

Previous research has already shown benefits to patients when pharmacists are part of a collaborative team with PCPs.

Funk notes the U of M study demonstrates that PCP teams that include a pharmacist embedded in the primary care clinic might be one strategy for addressing provider burnout. Future research will continue to focus on PCP-[pharmacist](#) working relationships in a more quantitative fashion to further investigate this finding.

More information: Kylee A. Funk et al. Primary Care Providers Believe That Comprehensive Medication Management Improves Their Work-Life, *The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine* (2019). DOI: [10.3122/jabfm.2019.04.180376](https://doi.org/10.3122/jabfm.2019.04.180376)

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