

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY BEST PRACTICES FOR FACILITATING PHYSICIAN WORK/LIFE BALANCE IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (NL)

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ABSTRACT: Oral Presentation

- Purpose:** Burnout and stress, among other issues, can be associated with a physician's ability to achieve a healthy work/life balance. The findings of recent studies suggest a need for strategies, initiatives, and/or policies for helping physicians of all ages achieve a healthier work/life balance, yet there is a dearth of information available on any existing regional, hospital/departmental, or community initiatives in NL. The purpose of this study is to identify and explore existing best practices, utilizing findings to draft a framework for a provincial physician work/life balance initiative.
- Methods:** Literature review/environmental scan; online survey-questionnaire; semi-structured interviews.
- Results:** Seventy (N=70) studies were reviewed, focusing on physician health interventions/ programs and/or personal strategies to support resiliency. There were N=306 survey respondents (57.2% specialists; 42.8% family physicians). Forty-four percent (43.9%) report feeling like they have not achieved work/life balance; 14.4% report they don't know. Gender and speciality increase this percentage, with 51.3% of female physicians feeling like they have not achieved work/life balance; 47.7% of specialists. Influential barriers reported by all respondents were increasing system and patient expectations, family demands, and lack of organizational culture and policies which support work/life balance. Respondents report individual strategies for maintaining work/life balance, such as taking vacations (82.2%), hobbies (71.8%), controlling their schedules (64.8%), and exercising (63.5%). Respondents also report the existence of some flexible and supportive work environments at the group practice/ departmental level, but less so at the institutional/RHA level.
- Conclusion:** Respondents report a need for a workplace culture and policies which support physician health and work/life balance. However, data suggests that defining what balance means and achieving it depends on the perspectives of individual physicians. Control and/or flexibility of scheduling, including the desire and ability to make choices, were reported as some of the influential enablers to achieving this status. The self-reported ability to achieve work/life balance is also seemingly influenced by gender and speciality, the latter of whom mainly practice within an institutional/RHA environment.