

# Confronting Change: How to Counter Burnout and Set Your Medical Practice Up to Thrive

Too many doctors are familiar with the symptoms of burnout, which can include emotional exhaustion, negativity, and cynicism. Maybe you feel like you've hit a wall, or you fear you will soon. Maybe you find yourself thinking, "I can't do this anymore," and even consider walking away from your practice. Burnout can take a serious toll on your livelihood, and diminish your ability to serve your patients.



Burnout impacts about half of doctors in the U.S., according to a 2019 [report](#) published in the *American Journal of Medicine*. That rate is two times higher than for most professions. The greatest incidence of burnout may be among doctors who are between 45 and 54 years old, according to a 2019 [study of cardiologists](#).

What's causing the epidemic of physician burnout, and are there any solutions?

This paper will help you understand the problem and explore the key challenges doctors face that are contributing to this crisis. Finally, if you're a doctor struggling to keep up with these challenges, we'll present some real solutions. These fixes go beyond band-aids and will help you take back control of your practice and set it on a path of long-term success.

## How Burnout Impacts Doctors and Patients

"Every evening I'd have two or three hours of catch-up trying to feel like I had control over what was happening," explains Dr. Brian Steele, Chief Medical Officer of Collaborative Health Systems, speaking of his experience managing a busy clinical practice. "It still wasn't enough time to keep up with the demands of documentation, and patient care, reviewing labs and information overload."

Doctors already felt overwhelmed before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the past few years, increased demands due to the pandemic and staff shortages have [crushed many professionals](#)

across the healthcare industry. Between May 28 and October 1, 2020, 43% of health care workers reported work overload and 49% reported burnout, according to a [survey of workers](#) in 42 organizations.

Unfortunately, when physicians get overwhelmed, it impacts patients too. For example, doctors who face burnout are more likely to report medical errors, according to a [Mayo Clinic survey](#) published in 2018.

As concerning, many physicians are deciding to leave the field. In a [more recent Mayo Clinic survey](#), one out of five doctors said they planned to leave their practice within the next two years. Unfortunately, the country doesn't have doctors to spare. The U.S. may face a shortage of between 17,800 and 48,000 primary care physicians by 2034, according to [data published](#) by the Association of American Medical Colleges.

## Three Key Challenges that Contribute to Burnout

It's not an overstatement to say that doctors are facing a tsunami of change in the healthcare landscape today. In particular, three changes are converging to add to already heavy workloads.

### 1. Electronic health records

Most doctors have traded their manila charts for computer software systems. By 2019, 89.9% of doctors were using electronic health records (EHRs) or electronic medical records (EMRs), according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

While the shift to EHRs comes with advantages for both doctors and patients, it also brings challenges. In a 2018 [survey by Stanford Medicine and Harris Poll](#) of primary care doctors using an EHR system for at least a month:

- **40% of PCPs believe EHRs create more challenges than benefits.**
- **49% thought EHRs detracted from their clinical effectiveness.**
- **71% said EHRs greatly contributed to physician burnout.**

Most physicians spend many hours each day entering data into an EHR system. In a [survey of 155,000 physicians](#) published in 2020 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, doctors said they spent an average of 16 minutes and 14 seconds per encounter using EHRs. Moreover, physicians in a [2018 study published in Family Medicine](#) spent more time, on average, using EHRs than they did meeting with patients.











The pressures to document in EHRs can take a toll, especially if doctors are already overwhelmed. Rhode Island physicians who didn't have enough time for documentation in EHRs suffered 2.8 times the rate of burnout in a [2018 study of 4,197 physicians](#).

## 2. Big data in healthcare

Browse the health and medical apps currently available and you may quickly feel overwhelmed. Consumers currently have access to [350,000 different mobile health \(mHealth\) apps](#). Moreover, [market researchers](#) expect the mHealth market to grow by 11.8% per year through 2030.

Health apps and remote monitoring systems collect reams of data, which patients increasingly want their doctors to compile and interpret. "There are so many digital tools coming to the marketplace," Dr. Steele explains. "All that information ... comes back to the primary care doctor to try to evaluate and assimilate and then translate for the patient into something meaningful."

Big data in healthcare creates opportunities, but it also presents [many challenges](#) for physicians, including:

 Accuracy	 Image pre-processing
 Unified format	 Security
 Data sharing	 Metadata
 Storage	 Querying
 Cleaning	 Visualization

Dr. Steele describes physicians' struggle to keep up with the deluge of data in medicine: "There are about two decades of information overload for the providers, and it's just getting worse as the technology gets more adopted, more widespread, and then implemented into many different care platforms and care service delivery areas."

## 3. Shift to value-based care

Doctors aren't just dealing with massive technological changes. They're also transitioning to a new way of treating and billing patients that ties payments to the quality of care delivered rather than the number of services performed.

[The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#) has introduced several value-based care models, and private insurers are adopting similar models. CMS has set a goal for all Medicare patients to be "in a care relationship with accountability for quality and total cost of care by 2030."

The shift to value-based care involves [complex, long-term](#) changes for physicians and health systems. However, to succeed in these emerging models, physicians need to quickly begin documenting patient encounters in alignment with value-based care models, which can add considerable pressure to physicians who are already overwhelmed.

# Real Solutions in a Time of Unprecedented Change

As a doctor, you're trained to be the captain of your ship. Your patients and team rely on you. But you're facing turbulent waters in the form of unprecedented change and challenges. Self-care and better organization aren't enough to prevent burnout.

You need a partner.

Collaborative Health Systems (CHS) serves as that partner for independent primary care doctors across the country. We're at the forefront of transforming practices for the benefit of your patients, the health care system, your bottom line — and your livelihood.

Not just another tech platform promising solutions, a unique approach to helping physicians, which comes down to a single tenet: collaboration. You remain the captain of your ship while we work alongside you to help you navigate the changes in the healthcare industry.

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*Here are four reasons the CHS approach may be the right solution for the challenges you're facing.*

## 1. Serving customized solutions for your practice

When you work with CHS, you maintain your autonomy. We partner with you to help you solve the problems you currently face — as well as the ones you'll deal with in the future. "We're about meeting the provider where they want to be met much the same way as the way primary care is delivered," says Dr. Steele. "It's about meeting a patient where they need to be met. It's about helping them with their needs, not stuffing a solution at them."

## 2. Helping you use technology on purpose to drive value

You're facing a deluge of technology, apps, software, and data, and your patients expect you to know how to analyze and interpret it to give them meaningful answers. We can help you gain control. By giving you tools to handle the technology and data, you can avoid feeling overwhelmed while maintaining your independence.

"We can help to harmonize the technology, harmonize the conversation, and harmonize the information overload," Dr. Brian Steele explains. "We can create that capacity to have an ecosystem ... that translates all that information, all that noise that's coming in ... not just to the doctor themselves, but a team of individuals that are working with them to help care for their population."

## 3. Improving the patient experience

You put your patients at the center of your practice and do everything in your power to give them an ideal patient experience. Too often, however, the system fails them at some point, which creates a frustrating experience for both patients and doctors.

When you partner with CHS, you partner with a team that can help you create a smoother pathway for your patients through their care journey. By integrating with your practice workflow, we can help you coordinate patient care, manage chronically ill patients, lower barriers (like transportation) to patient visits, and prevent unnecessary trips to the emergency room.

## 4. Boosting your revenue

With the shift to value-based care, you leave Medicare dollars on the table if you don't document in a way that aligns with the new models. The shift from volume to value is complicated, but we're here to help with the transition. You may see an immediate boost in revenue, which can help your practice thrive so you can do what you do best: care for your patients.

## Conclusion

The pace of change in the healthcare landscape isn't slowing. EHRs and digitally enabled care are here to stay, and value-based care is transforming the healthcare system whether the industry is ready or not. Plus, new and unexpected changes are always on the horizon.

You don't need to face this collision of challenges alone. When you work with Collaborative Health Systems, you remain the captain of your ship, with a trusted partner at your side to help you navigate change and improve care for your patients. With a team to help you manage the situations and systems that are causing you to feel overwhelmed, you don't have to worry about burnout and instead focus efforts where they matter—on your patients and your practice.

## For More Information

Call: (877) 477-3748

Web: [www.collaborativehealthsystems.com](http://www.collaborativehealthsystems.com)