

## President's Column

# We Want YOU to Live Well

### How can the AAN help more neurologists be satisfied in their jobs?

That has been a nagging question among Academy leaders for several years. We are the preeminent organization for neurologists and serve our members with an array of programs, services, and products that help you do your job better today than yesterday—and better tomorrow than today. And while these benefits may help make your job easier and enable you to be more effective in treating your patients, they don't necessarily help you be more satisfied with your work.

We know all too well that the myriad regulatory hassles that practicing neurologists face daily take valuable time away from the reason you became a neurologist in the first place—to treat your patients. The constantly changing reporting requirements, introduction of new payment policies, and requirements for maintenance of certification can make one feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and angry. The burden of these feelings, whether conscious or subconscious, can extinguish one's passion for our profession, and help lead to burnout.

In 2015, we launched a task force to research the issue of physician burnout—what it is, how it happens, and what can be done to deal with it effectively and improve work-life balance for our members.

Burnout is common in all practice settings and all subspecialties, but neurologists are more highly susceptible to burnout. *Neurology is the only medical specialty that has both one of the highest rates of burnout and the lowest rate of work-life balance.*

Burnout is described as lack of well-being due to a poor work-life balance. A sense of low personal accomplishment. A feeling of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that can lead to the loss of interest and enthusiasm for practicing medicine.

Burnout is a significant problem in neurology, and it's getting worse over time. Practicing neurologists experiencing burnout may not meet their potential in their jobs and their private lives.

This may cause suboptimal clinical judgment, lack of empathy with patients, lack of career satisfaction, and health problems, and exacerbate work-life conflicts.

This problem impacts the health of our overall specialty, too, as more neurologists may leave practice early, fewer may enter neurology as a career choice. And since we already are facing a shortage of neurologists, this affects access to care.



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We divided our task force into two groups. One, co-chaired by AAN Board member Neil A. Busis, MD, FAAN, a former chair and current member of the AAN's Medical Economics and Management Committee, and Kerry H. Levin, MD, member of the Education Committee, studied this burnout issue intensively. The Academy randomly surveyed 5,000 US members this past winter and had a very high participation rate of 40 percent—which suggested this issue struck a chord among our members. The results of the survey are still in the process of being prepared for publication and we will use this data as leverage in our policy and advocacy discussions.

The other group of task force members led by Jennifer R. Molano, MD, FAAN, a member of the Member Engagement Committee, and Board member and Practice Committee Chair Heidi B. Schwarz, MD, FAAN, addressed how to mitigate burnout. They identified the three main sources of burnout: regulatory, workplace, and the individual. Then they set about to research and gather tools, strategies, and resources to help members prevent and mitigate burnout.

# Live Well

Taking Care of Your Patients  
Starts with Taking Care of You

[AAN.com/LiveWell](http://AAN.com/LiveWell)



## President's Column

### Your health matters to the AAN and we're here to help.

First, I hope you recognize that we are doing everything we can on the health policy front to decrease your regulatory hassles and limit the impact of new policy issues, reporting requirements, and reimbursement changes. We also have had some success in advocating to decrease the burden of maintenance of certification and we made related education programs free for members to lessen the financial hardship. Please know that each day, AAN staff and member volunteers are fighting on your behalf to make it easier to be a successful neurologist. Change may be slow and incremental, but we do not give up.

### In the meantime, we want you to be aware that it is possible to prevent burnout as well as restore well-being.

Today, I'm happy to report that we have launched our new webpage at [AAN.com/LiveWell](http://AAN.com/LiveWell) with a range of resources to provide you with tips, tools, and strategies for cultivating well-being and resiliency in your life.

We know that one size does not fit all, so we have compiled a variety of didactic and interactive resources to help address regulatory, workplace, and individual frictions that spark burnout. We are planning to offer programs through our Leadership University at the 2017 Annual Meeting that will help you become a resilient leader and recapture the joy of practicing neurology. And we're looking into convening a conference dedicated to mitigating burnout and promoting a stronger sense of well-being.

I'm also pleased to tell you that the AAN is far ahead of many other specialties and organizations in recognizing that burnout is a crisis in our midst that must be understood and addressed if we are going to be the best we can be for our patients, our families and colleagues, and our selves.

This happened because the AAN listens to its members. We exist to serve you and we care about you. And even though we already are fighting against these regulatory hassles that contribute to burnout, we knew we had to take more direct action in this area for more immediate solutions. The fact that there was more member interest for participating on our task force than there were spaces available assured us that this focus is necessary. There is tremendous determination and passion among the members on the task force to understand this problem and take the necessary steps to help solve it.

While the Academy continues to tackle the overarching regulatory issues, each of us has a personal and professional responsibility to be true to the ancient proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." Because only when we are more whole and fully engaged and satisfied—at work, at home, and in our



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communities—can we have the best assurance that we will, indeed, be able to fully take care of others.

Please look into the resources we are providing at [AAN.com/LiveWell](http://AAN.com/LiveWell). We also want you to share your experiences and suggestions on how deal with stress and refresh yourself. Whether it's a success story about resiliency or an idea you wish to share, we want to hear it! Your feedback is invaluable as we strive to make our well-being resources meaningful and relevant to you. Let me know if there are policy changes we should fight for—or against—to make your jobs easier, if there are other effective programs and tools that we should add, and if there are more ways the AAN can help you be more satisfied in your job.

We want to help you Live Well! •

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