

HOMERuN COVID-19 Collaborative Provider Wellness Focus Groups

April 19, 2021 Newsletter



The Hospital Medicine Reengineering Network (HOMERuN) is a national network of Hospital Medicine investigators at 12 academic medical centers (AMCs) and 50 affiliated sites. During the COVID-19 pandemic, HOMERuN leadership formed the “COVID-19 Collaborative” as a mechanism to share information and practices regarding pandemic responses across participating institutions.

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Provider Wellness Strategies During the Pandemic

Multiple focus groups conducted on 1/29/21 identified the following wellness strategies as most effective and highly utilized at Hospital Medicine academic medical centers across the

country. In addition, the focus groups identified key changes in wellness strategies over the course of the pandemic and opportunities for improvement.

Bidirectional communication

- Regular faculty surveys of needs; some institutions with monthly burnout surveys.
- Weekly town halls, update emails. Simultaneously avoid email overload.
- Availability of leadership to faculty was crucial.
- Intentional recognition of contribution by hospitalists was very important for morale.
- Change over the course of the pandemic: Increased transparency, especially around PPE.
- Opportunity for improvement: Some places with paucity of face-time from upper-level leadership to frontline workers is a missed opportunity to offer gratitude and increase morale.
- Opportunity for improvement: Spread this communication outward with more communication from the medical establishment to our communities at-large to battle misinformation.

Caring for providers financially—highest impact interventions:

- Institutions provided funding to continue research or continue salary support.
- Institutions provided funding to pay hospitalists when pulled in for backup, extra clinical time.
- Institutions provided funding to pay for additional patient care teams to offload work.
- Hospitals paid for hotels for staff.
- Hospitals paid for childcare for staff.
- Shows hospitals “put their money where their mouth is.”
- Opportunity for improvement: More support from non-hospitalist colleagues and other department members to shoulder the clinical burden would have been appreciated.
- Opportunity for improvement: Childcare for health care workers was not addressed at some institutions.

Tangible wellness offerings—highest impact interventions:

- Dedicated office space, dedicated break rooms, places to meditate.
- Change over course of pandemic: Gifts of food and other offerings have decreased or stopped since start of pandemic.
- Opportunity for improvement: Avoid “wellness burnout” and making sure people don’t feel like you are just “checking the box” with wellness offerings. “Things that will make people’s lives easier” are most useful and appreciated.

Psychiatric support:

- Dedicated mental health hotlines with variable response, sometimes helpful and sometimes seen as “another thing to do.”
- Change over course of pandemic: Mental health resources existed before but enhanced during the pandemic.

Socialization opportunities:

- Intentional unstructured time for socialization and connection embedded into the start of meetings, i.e., first 10 minutes.

- Establishment of group WhatsApp chats for sharing of best practices but also fun images and ideas and morale support.
- Zoom happy hours.

COVID-19 impact on Hospital Medicine moving forward:

- *Bolstered by the pandemic and hopefully continue to build upon:*
 - Opportunities for hospitalists to step into more visible roles in media and public health.
 - The ability to make rapid improvements to hospital processes like order sets.
- *Largely negatively impacted by the pandemic and hopefully rebuild:*
 - Complexities of care that take away from patient-facing clinical time.
 - Burnout leading to less appreciation of the spiritual and emotional aspects of practicing medicine.
 - Opportunity for improvement: Hospitalists have a desire for their contribution to the pandemic to be remembered and possibly memorialized or recognized somehow.

Our next meeting will be May 7, 2021.

Key Promising Strategies

Caring for Providers Financially: Funding to continue research, salary support, to pay hospitalists pulled in for backup or extra clinical time, to pay for additional care teams to offload work.

Tangible Wellness Offerings: Particularly dedicated socially-distanced office space, break rooms, and places to eat or meditate.

Check out the [HOMERuN COVID-19 Knowledge Base](#) for more details.

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