

## What do doctors, lawyers, and preachers have in common? **Burnout**



*By: Kimberly Fagan, M.D., of Fagan Sports Medicine*

**Burnout**...it happens to doctors, lawyers and clergy. This seems to be an odd collection of individuals but, believe it or not, we seem to have some traits or situations in common. We are in the people business. We care for others--yes, even lawyers care for people!

We often have excessive workloads, demanding schedules, and a sense of loss of control. In addition, we often share common traits including perfectionism, emotional suppression, and difficulty asking for help. We tend to be "doers". Our self-worth is often attached to what we do. If we are not replenishing this outpouring of energy, it is easy to see how we can become depleted. We become exhausted... mentally, emotionally, and physically. Overtime we become depersonalized and slide into cynicism, distancing ourselves from our work and others. We begin to feel that our personal accomplishments are lacking, which leads to a profound sense of personal worthlessness. These are the characteristic signs of burnout according to Christina Maslach, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at the University of California in Berkeley. She is best known as one of the pioneering researchers on job burnout and author of the *Maslach Burnout Inventory*, the most widely used research measure in the field of burnout.

We recognize stress as a part of life. We need a certain amount just to make us get up in the morning, to motivate us to do our jobs, to finish that report, to move on to the next patient, to read the journals, to keep us on our toes. A "normal" amount of stress is considered important, even necessary, to help us function at our peak. However, continued moderate to high levels of stress for prolonged periods of time without adequate coping skills in place can be dangerous. The boundary between optimal functional stress and burnout is blurrier than one might think. One can slide down this slippery slope without noticing if one is not aware of the warning signs.

Dr. Arch Hart, Senior Professor of Psychology and Dean Emeritus at Fuller Theology Seminar, provided the following distinctions between stress and burnout in his book, *The Anxiety Cure*:

<b>STRESS</b>	<b>BURNOUT</b>
Over engagement	Disengagement
Emotions over reactive	Emotions blunted
Physical damage is primary	Emotional damage is primary
Exhaustion-physical	Exhaustion-motivation
Disintegration	Demoralization
Loss of fuel and energy	Loss of hope and ideals
Depression-need to protect and conserve energy	Depression-due to grief of loss of ideals and hope
Sense of urgency and hyperactivity	Sense of helplessness and hopelessness
Panic, phobic and anxiety type disorders	Paranoia, depersonalization and detachment
May kill you prematurely	May not kill you, but life may not seem worth living

"Burnout" is not a DSM-IV diagnosis. It is not considered a mental illness. It is simply a term used to describe a condition to which professionals in people-oriented careers are susceptible. It culminates in emotional, intellectual and physical exhaustion. **Continued on Page 3**

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## Executive Director's Corner



By: Martha Waters Wise

By now each of you should have received notice that the FTC pushed back the implementation date for the Red Flags Rule until August 1, 2009. For those who have furnished our office with your current e-mail addresses, we have tried to keep you apprised of the requirements and applicable deadlines and have forwarded the AMA Guidance Document and sample policy as well as information on the FTC's "Create Your Own Identity Theft Prevention Program: A Guided 4-Step Process" which was released on May 13. This template is designed for low risk creditors to assist you in bringing your office into compliance with the Red Flags Rule. You should make sure to review these materials, prepare your policy and train your staff on its requirements prior to the August 1 deadline.

If you have not yet reviewed the FTC program, you can do so at:

<http://www2.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/redflagsrule/index.shtml>

By accessing that page, creditors can answer several on-line questions and then print the program.

As this issue of Pulse is going to the printer, the Alabama Legislature has ended its regular session without adopting a bill allowing Jefferson County to collect its occupational tax. The County Commission is pressing the Governor to call a special session for purposes of enacting a bill to allow collection of the occupational tax. The debate as to whether professionals should be included is continuing.

You may have noticed a new look on some of the recent e-mails you have received from

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## In The News

**W. Earle Riley, M.D.**, was presented with the Samuel Buford Word Award at MASA's Annual Session in April. This award is named in memory of S. Buford Word, M.D., who was serving as MASA's president at the time of his death. The Word Award is the highest honor presented by the Medical Association and is given in recognition of service to humanity beyond the usual scope of medical practice, with such services having been rendered at some personal sacrifice. Over the last 40 years, Dr. Riley has been a dedicated presence in the Alabama medical field, from academics to politics as well as leadership and patient care.

The following JCMS members were recognized for fifty years of practice at MASA's Annual Session: **Albert Oberman, M.D.; Bobby P. Lemay, M.D.; Cecil Morgan Jr., M.D.; David Sperling, M.D.; Gene V. Ball, M.D.; Jack C. Whites, M.D.; Jerome G. Ippolito, M.D.; John G. Cocoris, M.D.; Merrill E. Compton Jr., M.D.; Pasquale A. Del Vecchio, M.D.; Robert G. Ford, M.D.; and Samuel P. Gillis, M.D.**

In addition, several JCMS members were elected to leadership positions at the MASA Annual Session: **Christopher Rosko, M.D., M.B.A.**, was elected Vice President; **Elizabeth Ennis, M.D.**, and **Bruce Key, M.D.**, were elected to serve on the Council on Medical Service. **Pamela Varner, M.D.**, completed her year as President of MASA.

## Volunteers sought for appointments

Various organizations throughout the state seek nominations from MASA's Board of Censors for appointments to health care related boards and committees. In addition, regular nominations are sought from the Alabama Medicaid Agency for their Drug Utilization and Review (DUR) Board and Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee. For more information or if you are interested in serving on a board or committee, please contact MASA at (800) 239-6272.

## Burnout, Continued From Page 1

It is insidious and progressive in its manifestation. Detachment, exhaustion and loss of satisfaction are key components. Denial is a common phenomenon in the early phases of burnout. It seems that it is always easier to blame the system, the partner, or the spouse rather than to look at our own contributions to the situation. The only problem with this approach is that we can seldom change anyone but ourselves, so it is a futile exercise and tends to lead to more frustration and a sense of lack of control. People who are seriously burned out usually exhibit at least some of the characteristic signs of depression. Signs and symptoms of burnout include:

- Feeling tired most of the time
- Musculoskeletal aches and pains / headaches
- Lowered immunity with frequent colds/ flu
- Change in appetite or sleep pattern
- Procrastination or ineffectiveness
- Loss of motivation
- Avoiding responsibilities
- Isolating from others
- Taking out frustrations on others
- Missing work or coming in late or leaving early from work
- Cynical or negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment
- Detachment
- Sense of failure and self doubt
- Feeling helpless and hopeless

Burnout... we have all heard of it, but recognizing it re-

mains rather elusive. We seem readily able to identify it when we see it in others, but are often slow to acknowledge the syndrome in ourselves. The American College of Physician Executives' Physician Morale Survey of 2006 reported that of the over 1,200 physicians surveyed, nearly 60% had considered leaving the practice of medicine behind. Obviously there is discontent. Physicians noted problems with their own attitude but felt in general they were better off than their colleagues- 46% rated their own morale as < 5 on a scale of 1-10, but rated 59% of their colleagues' morale as < 5 on this same scale. Nine out of ten physicians in the survey recognized at least one stressor in their colleagues: emotional burnout, fatigue, family disruption, depression, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and others. Many admitted to experiencing these symptoms themselves. Lawyers didn't fare much better- according to Gerald LeVan's book, *Lawyer's Lives Out of Control*, 40% of lawyers choose not to practice law, and of those that do, 25% wish they had selected another career with 25% also stating they would not recommend law as a career choice for their children. Data on clergy reported in the book, *Pastors at Risk* by H.B. London and Neil Wiseman, is just as dismal with burnout cited as the leading cause of pastors leaving the pulpit. Though doctors, lawyers, and clergy are at high risk for burnout, there is no group that is risk-free.

It seems there is a cost to caring. Anyone in the profession of caring for people is subject to paying the cost. However, it is difficult to predict who will be affected since different people react differently while working under the same conditions. Burnout is a multidimensional syndrome- simply being under stress does not predict who will burnout. Factors that must be taken into consideration include: genetic predisposition, experience, environment, business type/ management setting, coping skills and lifestyle choices. Even the same person under the same circumstances with a different mindset or with different coping skills can handle the same stress differently.

Contributing factors and management strategies alike can be broken down into three major categories: work, lifestyle and personality traits/characteristics. The initial instinct is to say, "yeah, but most of these are out of my control". However, an honest evaluation of one's own contribution often reveals that much of the chaos is self made. Once we accept at least a small part of the responsibility, there is a sense of at least a modest degree of empowerment. We once again realize we do have choices. Of course, we must also realize that with every choice there is a consequence.

The work environment is a pressure cooker for burnout. There are multiple factors that come into play. Work stressors include:

- Excessive workload/ over scheduling of patients
- Ambiguous requirements
- Inadequate support
- High consequences of failure
- Unfair work environment
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of personal control
- Lack of recognition/reward
- Inadequate time off

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## New Members

Noel M. Bergquist, M.D. ....	Radiology
David N. Bolus, M.D. ....	Radiology
Michael E. Brewer, Jr., M.D. ....	Urology
John M. Cantrell, D.O. ....	Resident
Charles A. Dasher, Jr., M.D. ....	Resident
Vipul K. Desai, M.D. ....	Internal Medicine
Jim Patrick Ellison ....	Student
William E. Lievens, M.D. ....	Resident
Alicia R. Mann, D.O. ....	Resident
Ryan C. Mann, D.O. ....	Resident
Andrew Paul Miller, M.D. ....	CardioVascular Disease
Karen Ann Parks ....	Student
Michael S. Reddington, D.O. ....	Emergency Medicine
Gaylon Renard Rogers, M.D. ....	Orthopedics
Jason Byron Thompson, M.D. ....	Internal Medicine
Julie Anne Turner ....	Student
Aimee H. Walsh, M.D. ....	Anesthesiology
Hayley White, M.D. ....	Resident
Susan B. Winchester, M.D. ....	Surgery

## Part-time Dermatologist

Seeking a part-time DERMATOLOGIST to serve as an investigator at our Brookwood area location. Flexible hours.

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For more information call:

**Dana Levering**

**205.870.8803 x25**

danalivering@radiantresearch.com



## Ask Robin Long for your MEMBER DISCOUNT!!

The Jefferson County Medical Society has arranged for its members to receive special discounts for collection and billing services. By special agreement with Healthcare Financial Services, LLC (HFS), members will get outstanding collections results and services while paying low contingency fee rates... no results, no fees for JCMS members. Take advantage of your JCMS affiliation and call Robin Long at 601-420-1242 or 1-877-747-7072 (Client Services). Your benefits will be worth the call as HFS designs a special campaign for your specific needs. Be sure to mention your membership with JCMS to receive the discounted rate.

(See ad on page 3)

## Articles Wanted

Pulse is interested in publishing articles written by our members as well as articles which would be of interest to our members. Because our members practice in every specialty, articles should be of wide interest to a variety of specialties. We would like to publish two articles per issue. Articles should be between 650 and 1000 words and should not be self-promoting or commercial in nature. Authors will be credited and the name of their practice will be included, along with a photograph of the author if one is furnished. Articles are not peer-reviewed and the content of the articles is the sole-responsibility of the author. The Jefferson County Medical Society does not assume responsibility for the accuracy or content of any articles published in Pulse. Deadlines for submitting articles to be published in 2009 are: January 4, March 3, May 5, July 3, September 2 and November 3.

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the JCMS—we have begun using a new service that allows us to e-mail all of our members within a matter of minutes instead of having to spread the e-mail distribution list over several days. If you have not yet furnished us with your current e-mail address, I would encourage you to do so. E-mail is a much quicker, more efficient way in which we can relay information to our members. We will not disclose your e-mail address to anyone else and will use it only for official Society communications!

## PHYSICIAN NEEDED:

The Alabama Disability Determination Service (DDS) invites letters of interest from physicians wanting to work part-time. An Alabama Medical License is required. The DDS is committed to maintaining a diverse workforce; and therefore, we encourage minority applications. The DDS has offices in Birmingham and Mobile. The work is reviewing disability claims. If interested, please contact the Medical Staff Supervisor, DDS, P. O. Box 830300, Birmingham, Alabama 35283-0300.

## In Memoriam

The JCMS wants to acknowledge the recent passing of the following JCMS members:

**Lonnie William Funderburg, M.D.**  
*March 13, 2009*

**V. Damodara Reddy, M.D.**  
*March 22, 2009*

**Louis S. Pappas, M.D.**  
*March 27, 2009*

**Leo Glenn Langner, M.D.**  
*April 30, 2009*

**Milton "Luke" Falkner White, Jr., M.D.**  
*May 20, 2009*

**Joseph Anthony Cunningham, M.D.**  
*June 3, 2009*

**Herbert N. Carmichael, M.D.**  
*June 7, 2009*

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### ***Burnout, Continued From Page 3***

Life outside of work ideally is our place of rest and recovery. Unfortunately this is often not the case. Lifestyle choices, or the lack thereof, can also contribute to the stressors in one's life. Lifestyle factors include:

- Lack of social support network
- Poor sleep habits
- No regular exercise routine
- Unhealthy diet
- No health maintenance
- No quality time off from work
- Lack of creative outlets/hobbies
- Lack of a spiritual connection
- High risk of substance abuse

The saying "wherever you go, there you are" is never more true than when dealing with stress and burnout. There are some personality traits that tend to lend themselves to this problem. These include:

- Perfectionism
- Pessimism
- Excitability
- Type A tendencies
- Being a poor fit for the job

Work environment, lifestyle and personality traits all provide opportunities for re-evaluation. Some of these we have control over, some we don't. What we do have control over is how we react to any person or situation.

Deciding where to start in this quest for a balanced life can seem overwhelming when in the middle of burnout. Many times, the real reason for going into medicine was lost under piles of paperwork. Somewhere along the way, values and priorities were pushed aside in order to try to meet the demands of the job. We lost sight of what was really important.

### ***Barons Event Rescheduled***

Due to the tornado which occurred on May 3, the Barons have rescheduled our event for June 28. Game time that day is 5:05 p.m., and hot dogs and hamburgers with all the trimmings will be served from 5-7:00 p.m. If you had tickets to attend the event on the original date, use those tickets for entry on June 28. If you did not make reservations for the May 3 event, but want to attend on June 28, please contact Martha at [mwise@jcmsalabama.org](mailto:mwise@jcmsalabama.org) or 933-8601.

That is where you start. Reconnect with your values and priorities. Actually make a list. From this list you will make future decisions. When your decisions line up with your values and priorities, the internal struggles diminish and you begin to live a life of integrity.

Once you have made a list of your values and priorities, notice during your day what is preventing you from living from this list. Are you a people pleaser? Are you full of fear? Are you power or money hungry? Are you worried about your outward appearance? Are you a perfectionist? Are you a control freak? Do you have well established boundaries? Do you know how to say "no"? If you discover an area that is a particular problem for you, make note of how it might be contributing to your stress level. Many of these factors go to the core of our personality traits and are difficult for us to see for ourselves and even more difficult to change. Sometimes we need outside help.

Take a good look at your work life and make changes where you can. This may mean working fewer hours, taking a half day off or seeing fewer patients. You may need to hire additional support staff or allocate more responsibility to the existing staff. It might be time to have a direct conversation with the colleague who is not carrying their fair share of the workload. Perhaps development of a monthly lunch group to discuss difficult cases or patients could help diffuse stress.

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### **Implementation of Routine HIV Testing**

UAB's Center for AIDS Research will be conducting a study to examine the implementation of CDC's new HIV testing recommendations and would like to ask you for your help. During the next months a survey will be mailed to members of the Jefferson County Medical Society, who are actively practicing in Internal Medicine, Family Medicine or OB/GYN. Please let us know if you need any additional information regarding this study or would like to learn more about it!?

Phone: (205) 934-7186

Thank you for your support!

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## **BURNOUT, Continued From Page 6**

The important concept to remember is that with every choice there are consequences. Working fewer hours may mean less money; confronting a colleague may make him not like you; asking the support staff to take on more tasks may cause you to lose your standing as their favorite physician. Do these consequences feed into your fears?

Crucial to recovery or prevention of burnout is stepping away from the fire. Quality time off is necessary. This means time away from work where you are not thinking about work. Trust me; if you die tomorrow someone will step in to take your place at work. You are just not that important in the big scheme of things. On the other hand, you are that important to your family and friends. Make time for them and you will be better for it. More importantly, make time for you. If you do not refuel you will not be able to give the best of yourself to your family. It is not selfish to take care of yourself--consider it health maintenance.

I suggest you create a vision of what a balanced life would look like. A simplified version includes:

Having a sense that there is enough time in the day to effectively accomplish work related tasks.

Having the ability to get through our daily work and family responsibilities without feeling drained.

Having the ability to participate in activities we enjoy on a regular basis.

At the heart of successful work-life balance are:

**Accomplishment**-getting the stuff we need to do done

**Enjoyment**-having the time for loved ones, fun, rest, exercise and hobbies

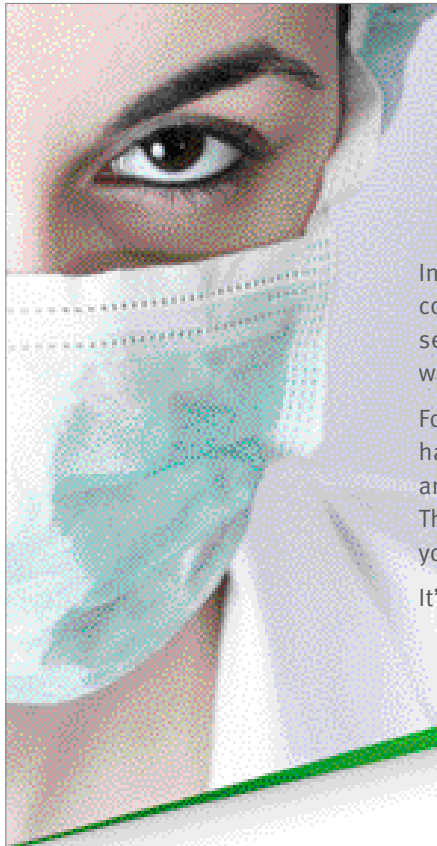
Increased awareness of the problem of burnout, knowledge of risk factors, means of early recognition, tools for prevention, early intervention and treatment are the ultimate goals of this article. Recognize that many of the signs and symptoms of stress overload and burnout overlap with depression. If you see that you continue to struggle with the symptoms of burnout and are not able to find your way out, seeking professional counseling may be your best solution.

If you would like to contact someone who burned out and survived to tell about it, please do not hesitate to contact me at [kimfaganmd@aol.com](mailto:kimfaganmd@aol.com).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

June 15	Foundation Trust Meeting – 5:00 p.m. Executive Committee Meeting – 5:30 p.m.
June 28	Barons Baseball Event – 5:05 p.m.
July 20	Executive Committee Meeting – 5:30 p.m.
Aug 5	Ethics Committee Meeting
Aug 17	Executive Committee Meeting – 5:30 p.m.

Contact Juanita Pruitt at 933-8601 or [jpruitt@jcmsalabama.org](mailto:jpruitt@jcmsalabama.org) for more information regarding any of the above events.



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