

# STRESS MODULE

APAMSA: STRESS  
MODULE

Volume I, Issue I  
December 2008

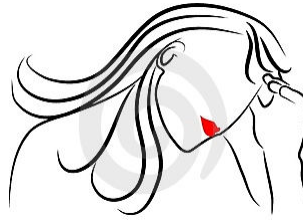
## Burnout Among Medical Students

It's no secret that medical school is tough. And apparently, things do not get easier as we move through our basic science courses into clinical rotations and finally are propelled into residency. However, to have been able to make it this far, we know we are able to rise up to the challenges (while making sure not to reveal any weaknesses to our classmates). Even if we do feel a bit miserable trying to learn many facts, mechanisms and drug names, the goal of success and being a doctor force us to excel, to keep going. It comes as no surprise to us that medical students are at a high risk of developing burnout and other mental health issues.

In Dr. Paula Chen's New York Times article, "Medical Student Burnout and the Challenge to Patient Care" she wrote candidly about how miserable and alone she had felt all through medical school. These feelings

were not something she had felt comfortable sharing with her classmates at the time. It wasn't until recently when she met up with former classmates for dinner that they felt comfortable enough to talk about these mutual feelings of unhappiness. One classmate revealed that at one point he thought about quitting while the other noted how medical school had caused his self esteem to plummet.

Furthermore, in the article Dr. Chen cites a study done by Dr. Liselotte Dyrbye and colleagues at the Mayo Clinic that found that burnout is a pervasive problem among medical students, with the risk of becoming burnt out increasing throughout the medical school career. The study defined burn out as, "professional distress in three domains: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low sense of personal accomplishment". In a larger study later, Dr. Dyrbye came upon a disturbing finding,



"1% of all the students surveyed also reported having suicidal thoughts in the past year." For those students, burnout and stress may have evolved into a much larger and more serious problem. Finally in a third study, Dr. Dyrbye found that burnout negatively impacted a medical student's ability to empathize with patients.

Thus, it is very important for medical students to learn how to deal with stress and burnout in a constructive manner for many reasons. One is for our own benefit: to maintain some sanity throughout our rigorous training regimen. Another is to realize that our mental health is just as important as our physical health when it comes to our (eventual) ability to care for patients.

To read the full article follow this link:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/31/health/chen10-30.html?\\_r=2&ei=5070&emc=etaI](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/31/health/chen10-30.html?_r=2&ei=5070&emc=etaI)

## De-stressing

What are some ways to cope with the stress of school and prevent burnout? There are both constructive and destructive methods. Learn which category the methods you have been using belongs to.

### Destructive methods:

- repressing your feelings
- obsessing about your perceived failures
- engaging in alcohol or substance abuse
- smoking
- binge drinking
- binge eating

- picking fights with close ones
- withdrawing from your social circle
- ignoring signs of poor health
- refusing to seek help
- reckless spending/retail therapy/excessive gambling
- not letting yourself relax

### Constructive methods:

- give yourself a break from studying
- seeking out people whom you trust to rant to
- meditating
- exercising
- going for a walk

- sleeping well
- maintaining a healthy diet
- writing/drawing /singing/etc.—any creative way you know how to express what you are feeling
- spending time with friends or family
- laughing
- watching a movie/reading a book/do something non-academically related

Sources:

<http://www.uhs.uga.edu/stress/wellnesslifestyle.html>

## Inside this issue:

<i>Medical School Resources Available for Students at Risk of Stress &amp; Burnout</i>	2
<i>Meditation</i>	2
<i>Healthy Eating</i>	3
<i>Casserole Recipes Using 5 ingredients or Less</i>	3
<i>Stress Free Activities Your Chapter Can Engage In</i>	3
<i>Signs of Stress-Word Search</i>	4
<i>About APAMSA</i>	4

## Some highlights in this issue:

- Become aware of studies and articles that have identified stress among medical students.
- Learn about methods to de-stress.
- Learn about healthy eating and quick recipes on a medical students budget.
- Get ideas to host a stress-free retreat program at your school's APAMSA chapter.

## Medical School Resources Available for Students at Risk of Stress and Burnout

A recent article written by Kathleen Phalen Tomaselli, "Medical student stress and burnout leave some with thoughts of suicide: Medical schools offer counseling to help students who may be at risk, but some refuse such assistance" within the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#), brought to our attention that there are resources and services available to medical students who experience stress and burnout and are at increased risk of suicide. This article mentions how "a study in the Sept. 2 *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that 50% of approximately 2,200 medical students surveyed at seven medical schools reported burnout, while 11% said they considered suicide in the past year."

Study co-author Tait D. Shanafelt, MD, director of the Mayo Clinic Dept. of Medicine Program on Physician Well-Being in Rochester, Minn., states that "there is extensive literature demonstrating medical

students begin medical school with mental health profiles similar to their non-medical peers, but through the course of medical school they experience substantial deterioration in their mental quality of life."

It is important to recognize that there are resources available at each medical school and institution. This article emphasizes that many times students may refuse help or become embarrassed to seek help.

"Medical students have typically been extremely successful throughout their prior academic and professional experiences, and it can be difficult for them to ask for help when they struggle," Dr. Shanafelt said. "They may be reluctant to access these [counseling services] because of confidentiality concerns." Many students have been high achieving students before medical school and struggles at the graduate school level may be first time failures for many stu-

dents.

The lead author, Liselotte N. Dyrbye, MD, of the *Annals* study and assistant professor of internal medicine at the Mayo Clinic, "suggests that burnout is reversible. We need to look at those who do recover and what makes recovery possible." It is important that students not be afraid to seek out and utilize the resources available on their medical campus. Help services include tutoring centers, career guidance, and personal counseling and psychological services. As brought to our attention within the article, according to guidelines by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, all accredited medical schools are required to provide personal counseling.

Read the full [Annals of Internal Medicine article](http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2008/10/20/prsb1020.htm) at <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2008/10/20/prsb1020.htm>.



*"A study in the Sept. 2 Annals of Internal Medicine found that 50% of approximately 2,200 medical students surveyed at seven medical schools reported burnout, while 11% said they considered suicide in the past year."*

## Meditation

Meditation has long been associated with religions like Hinduism and Buddhism and is incorporated into exercises like yoga. It is also a great way to regroup, relax and de-stress. By focusing on your posture and breathing, you will become more aware of your body and allow it to relax gradually.

Below is a quick guide to doing some mindfulness meditation from <http://altmedicine.about.com/cs/mindbody/a/Meditation.htm>

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place. Sit in a chair or on the floor with your head, neck and back straight but not stiff.

2. Try to put aside all thoughts of the past and the future and stay in the present.

3. Become aware of your breathing, focusing on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body as you breathe. Feel your belly rise and fall, the air enter your nostrils and leave your mouth. Pay attention to the way each breath changes and is different.

4. Watch every thought come and go, whether it be a worry, fear, anxiety or hope. When thoughts come up in your mind, don't ignore or suppress them but simply note them, remain calm and use your breathing as an anchor.

5. If you find yourself getting carried away in your thoughts, observe where your mind went off to, without judging, and simply return to your breathing. Remember not to be hard on yourself if this happens.

6. As the time comes to a close, sit for a minute or two, becoming aware of where you are. Get up gradually.



## HEALTHY EATING

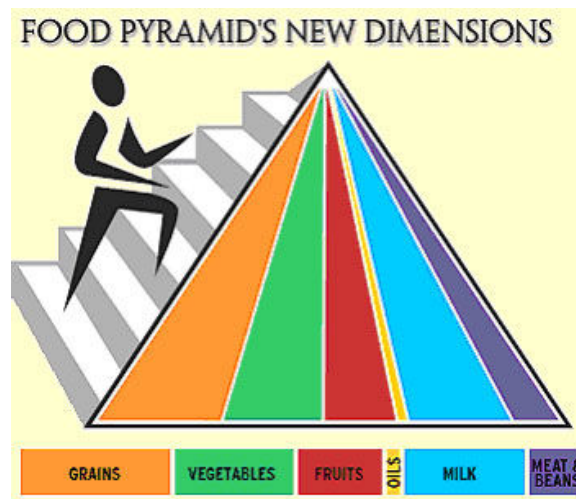
Medical school is not easy. We do not need additional stress caused by an illness. The best way to avoid catching colds and getting sick is to eat healthy and exercise. It is vital that we live healthy to set an example to our patients.

Check out and establish what comprises the best balanced foods for you by examining the pyramid. There is no longer a single serving recommendation for grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat & beans. Recommen-

dations varying depending on age, gender, height, and weight.

Visit and determine the appropriate food pyramid balance for yourself at: [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

Access this website to see healthy menu ideas. Listen to podcasts and view further tips and resources.



## CASSEROLE RECIPES USING FIVE INGREDIENTS OR LESS

### Chicken and Veggie Casserole

- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast
- 1 cup regular rice
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 ½ cups water
- 2 cups frozen mixed veggies

Mix veggies, rice, water and soup together and pour into a buttered casserole dish. Top with chicken. Cover and bake at 350 for about 40-45 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.

### Nacho Hamburger Casserole

- 1 can nacho cheese sauce
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 package of egg noodles, cooked and drained
- 1 lb. hamburger meat, browned and drained crushed tortilla chips

Mix first 4 ingredients together and pour into a buttered casserole dish. Top with chips. Bake at 350 until heated through.

### Pork Chop and Bean Casserole

- 4 boneless pork chops
- 1 family size can of pork and beans
- 1 cup bbq sauce

Place beans in casserole dish. Top with chops. Pour bbq sauce over chops. Cover and bake at 350 for 30-35 minutes or until chops are cooked through.

\*\*<http://recipe-board.kraftsfoods.com/topic>



## Stress Free Activities Your Chapter Can Engage in:

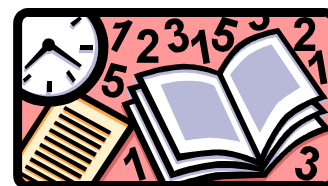
- Have a stress-free retreat; aim to practice constructive ways to prevent burnout.
- Have a discussion on Asian American mental health issues and the cultural stigma surrounding these patients.
- Invite health professionals who care for Asian American patients with mental

health problems to share their experience with you.

- Visit your school's health or wellness center and get an understanding of the types of counseling they provide.
- Open up dialogue between members and encourage those who are struggling to talk to a school counselor.

Other resources:

- <http://asianamericanhealth.nlm.nih.gov/behissues02.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/Populations/AsianAm/AsianAm.htm>
- [http://healthyminds.org/multimedia/LTF-MH%20of%20AAPI\\_nopic.pdf](http://healthyminds.org/multimedia/LTF-MH%20of%20AAPI_nopic.pdf)



**APAMSA: STRESS  
MODULE**



**Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association**  
*Facing the Health Care Challenges of the Asian Pacific Islander Community*

National Education Officers:  
Helen Lee  
Jennifer Luo

E-mail: [education@apamsa.org](mailto:education@apamsa.org)

For any further questions about APAMSA contact the President Shelly Choo at [president@apamsa.org](mailto:president@apamsa.org)

[http://  
www.apamsa.org/](http://www.apamsa.org/)

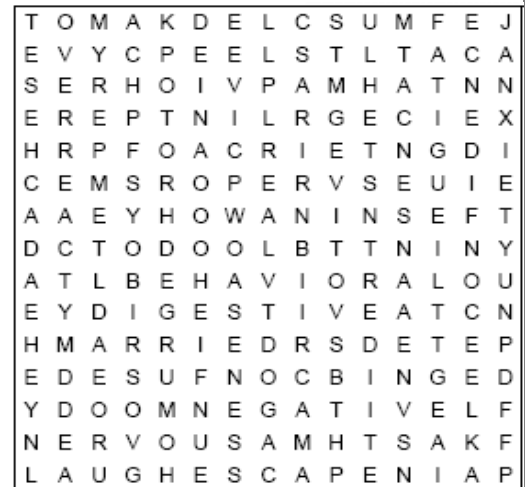
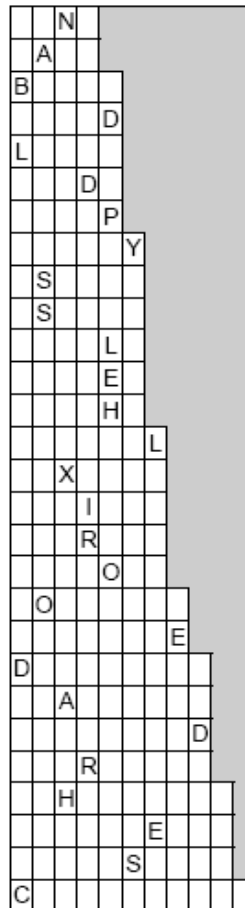


APAMSA is the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association. We are a national organization that aims to address those issues important to Asian-American medical students.

One part of our mission is to bring together Asians and others interested in the health issues that affect Asians so that we may have a strong, collective, public and political voice. We are interested in both directly promoting the health and well-being of the Asian community as well as in helping all health care workers who work with these communities understand how to care for the Asian patient in a culturally sensitive manner. Finally, APAMSA provides an important forum for APA medical students to meet, exchange information and experiences and develop personally and professionally.

**SIGNS OF STRESS-  
WORD SEARCH**

In some people skin problems like \_\_\_ can become a problem  
Chest \_\_\_ is never a good sign  
The urge to \_\_\_ while eating or shopping happens to some people  
High \_\_\_ pressure is common in people who feel stressed  
The urge to \_\_\_ or cry at the wrong time can be symptom of stress  
Someone who is \_\_\_ is also said to be sullen or brooding  
Nighttime \_\_\_ might be disturbed or too many naps may be needed  
\_\_\_ is a lack of enthusiasm or absence of emotion  
Stress can cause shortness of breath, not unlike \_\_\_  
The need to \_\_\_ or run away is one way of trying to cope  
\_\_\_ pain or tension means you need to relax  
You might be more likely to lose your \_\_\_ if you are feeling stressed  
You might gain or lose \_\_\_  
Increased intake of \_\_\_ or drugs can be a way of dealing with stress  
\_\_\_ is a feeling of dread or apprehension  
Excessive yawning or the desire to nap are signs of \_\_\_  
Good events like getting \_\_\_ or getting a promotion can cause stress  
Nail biting, pacing, and hair twirling are some \_\_\_ habits  
Someone who is stressed might become easily \_\_\_ by directions  
Stressed people tend to see only the \_\_\_ side of things  
Too much stress can lead to \_\_\_ problems like heartburn or ulcers  
Frequent \_\_\_ can be a physical sign of stress  
Being "on edge" means you are easily \_\_\_  
Stress can cause people to \_\_\_ to unexpected problems  
Stress causes emotional & physical symptoms as well as \_\_\_ ones  
Lack of \_\_\_ in ones' abilities or decisions can be a symptom  
A sad feeling of gloom or inadequacy  
It can be hard to \_\_\_ on what is right in front of you



Enter unused letters from puzzle, in order:

Copy boxed letters to form your hidden message:

Solve Hundreds of Clue Search Puzzles  
Covering All Kinds of Topics for FREE!  
No Membership or Email Required!  
Visit us at [www.ClueSearchPuzzles.com](http://www.ClueSearchPuzzles.com)

©2007 Clue Search Puzzles™ All Registered Trademarks are the properties of their respective owners. Visit us at [www.ClueSearchPuzzles.com](http://www.ClueSearchPuzzles.com)

- Answers can be found: <http://www.cluesearchpuzzles.com/SIGNSOFSTRESS.html>
- Have fun with another word search: <http://www.cluesearchpuzzles.com/FIGHTINGSTRESS.html>