

Moral Distress and Burnout during Psychiatry Residency: A Longitudinal Study



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Introduction

- Moral distress refers an experience of personal distress related to situations in which an individuals' choices and actions are thwarted by constraints, and are known to affect clinician's well-being, job retention and correlates with burnout (1,2)
- Burnout is a psychological construct composed of three domains: emotional exhaustion, cynicism and loss of meaning in work, and feelings of ineffectiveness or lack of accomplishment (3)
- Aim:** To measure longitudinal and rotation-specific moral distress and burnout among psychiatry residents at the University of British Columbia (UBC). We also examined associations between moral distress and burnout, and respondent demographic characteristics, post-graduate year (PGY1-5), and time of year

Methods

- From July 2016 through June 2020, the Moral Distress Scale-Revised (MDS-R) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were distributed electronically to all psychiatry residents every four and twelve months, respectively
- Longitudinal mixed effect modeling and generalized estimating equations, with adjustment for multiple comparisons, were used to assess associations between demographics, time of year, and specific clinical rotations (independent factors) and moral distress, intention to leave the job due to moral distress, and burnout (dependent factors)
- Participants were asked to list, in-order, the last four rotations they completed. Similar to the MDR-S they rated frequency and level of disturbance of moral distress and a composite score was calculated (range 0-16) for each of the 4 rotations.

Results

Table 1. Sample characteristics of psychiatry residents.

Demographic Characteristics	N (% total)
Mean age	30.7 (SD 5.5, range 24-51)
Gender	
Male	77 (55%)
Female	48 (35%)
Prefer not to disclose	5 (4%)
Missing data	11 (8%)
Ethnicity	
White	84
East Asian	23
South Asian	16
Other	11
Missing	5
# Observations by PGY level	
PGY1	111
PGY2	83
PGY3	80
PGY4	47
PGY5	36
PGY6	2

Figure 1. Proportion of respondents who met criteria for burnout, stratified by PGY year at time of response.

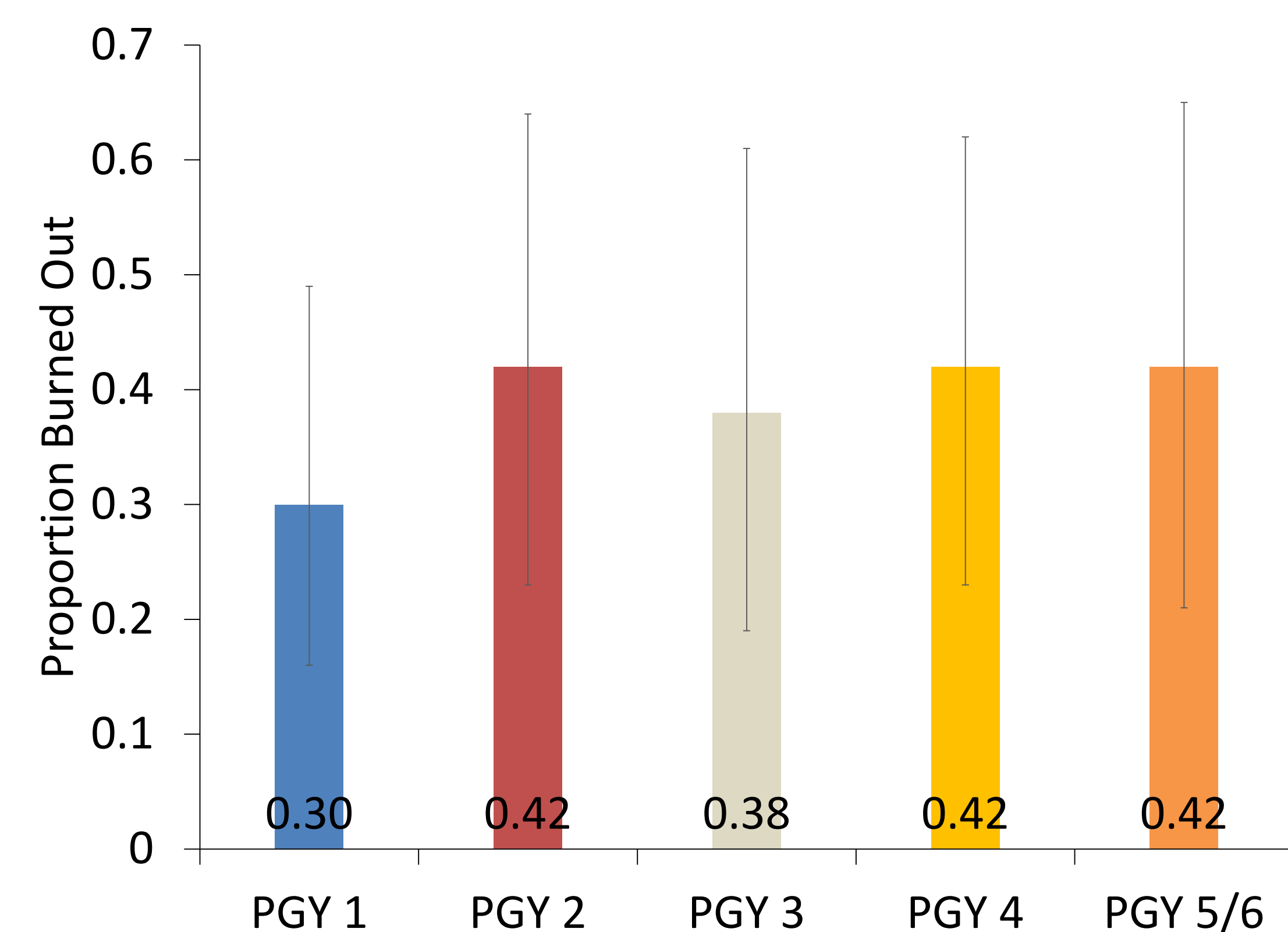
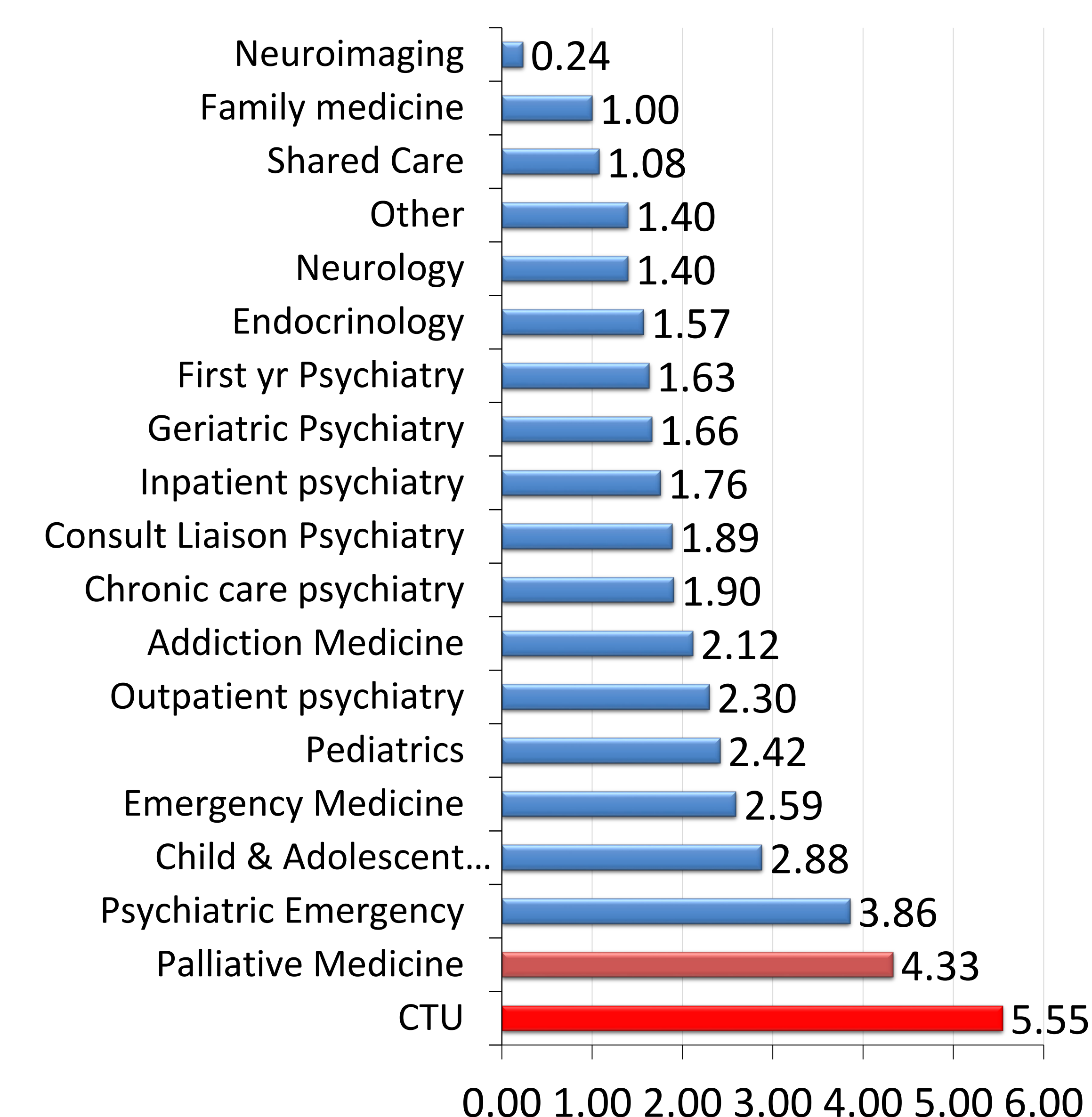


Figure 2. Antecedent rotation and associated moral distress during psychiatry residency training.



Summary

- 139/174 (79%) psychiatry residents participated in the study (Table 1)
- The 4 year prevalence of burnout among psychiatry residents was 39% (Fig 1). Residents who were older (> 40 years) were more likely to be burned out due to higher scores for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. There was no significant across gender or PGY levels
- Sixteen percent of all psychiatry residents had considered leaving the job due to moral distress, with significant trend for a higher proportion during the PGY2 year (p=0.03)
- Being older or male gender was associated with a higher likelihood of considering leaving due to moral distress
- Moral distress was highest after completing Internal Medicine, Psychiatric Emergency, and Palliative Medicine rotations, compared with all other rotations (p < 0.05)

Conclusion

- Moral distress is moderate but proportion burned out is high among psychiatry residents, especially among those who are older. Specific high-acuity rotations, training years (PGY2), and demographic strata (>40 years age, male) may benefit from targeted approaches toward supporting residents because they may experience more moral distress and its consequences

References

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