

LANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY | MARCH 2026

MEDICAL MATTERS

Caring for the Caregivers

Dr. Sandra Rood explains how the PWP has provided trusted support to sustain her long-term well-being.



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Advertising & Membership Inquiries

info@lcmcdsociety.com

Lane County Medical Society


PO BOX 7192

Springfield, OR 97475

Phone: 541-686-0995

info@lcmcdsociety.com

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New providers have been added to the PWP. Visit lcmcdsociety.com/pwp to view the full list or for more details.

LCMS Foundation & Lasting Impact

BY SHONDRA HOLLIDAY
DIRECTOR, LCMS FOUNDATION

Physicians are trained to push through long hours, high stakes, and emotional intensity, but wellness today is not just about individual resilience — it is about sustaining careers, families, and the communities that depend on you.

Administrative burden, staffing shortages, and loss of autonomy continue to strain physicians. While burnout has eased since its pandemic peak, nearly half of all U.S. physicians still report symptoms. These pressures affect not only professional performance, but also relationships, sleep, physical health, and a sense of purpose. Physician wellness is not a luxury. It is a professional imperative.

The LCMS Foundation's Physician Wellness Program (PWP) exists to provide confidential, practical support without judgment. Counseling services offer professional mental healthcare. Coaching helps physicians navigate career decisions, leadership challenges, and the integration of work and life. Educational resources address often-overlooked contributors to stress, including financial health, nutrition, and malpractice-related strain. Together, these services reflect the realities of modern practice.

Sustaining this work requires ongoing investment. In addition to year-round donation appeals, LCMS hosts fundraising galas that benefit the LCMS Foundation. The next event is a Kentucky Derby-themed Gala that aims to raise \$50,000 to expand counseling and coaching capacity, and strengthen program infrastructure.

Here is a sneak peek at some of the exciting live auction options:

1. VIP Wine Tour & Tasting for 6 — Exclusive Willamette Valley Experience, with breathtaking views and world-class wine
2. “Be Well” Escape combines indulgent services and hand-selected products for a luxurious, pampering experience.

We invite you to attend this fun-filled event to bid on these exclusive curated packages by registering on our website.

At the recent Annual Meeting, LCMS Foundation President, Dr. Lindsey Fix, shared recent accomplishments from 2025, including:

- Expanding the PWP from five to twenty providers
- Graduating fifteen LCMS physicians from the Physician Leadership Project
- Funding 2 scholarships for Serenity Lane's Professionals Program
- Creating a video introducing the PWP to physicians early and often.



We also added the Foundation's first employee. The board was expanded to include two physicians, a physician spouse, an accountant, a non-profit leader, and an organizational ally. In addition, we held a Financial Wellness series addressing financial issues ranging from student loans and managing budgets to making your money last through retirement and beyond.

For 2026, we're thrilled to announce our newest resource —

an exclusive opportunity for LCMS members at a deeply discounted rate for the Physicians' Edge Practice Management & Finance Course.

This program is designed specifically for practicing physicians and clinical leaders who want to strengthen their understanding of the business side of medicine. Through a series of on-demand modules, you'll gain actionable insights into:

- Financial statements and practice performance metrics
- Revenue cycle optimization
- Ambulatory care business models
- Physician compensation structures
- Value-based care economics
- Strategic growth and partnerships

Dr. Fix reports, “It's practical and actionable. I was quickly able to identify overlooked revenue, reduce unnecessary expenses, and gain confidence to take an active leadership role in my practice. The return on investment was almost immediate.”

Physician's Edge offers 32.5 CME and is available to LCMS members for \$1995 (reg. \$4995). To access, scan QR code below. Bonus! For every program purchased the Foundation receives a \$500 donation.



Supporting the Foundation is an investment in your colleagues and in the future of medicine. It helps ensure physicians can access support before stress becomes a crisis — and reinforces that wellness is a shared professional responsibility. ♦

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Chart Notes

“Having something [like the PWP] that is private, that is reliable, with competent providers who understand what physicians are going through is really valuable... It’s so good to have a team of people that are really devoted to working with physicians that are able to give us that support.”

– DR. SANDRA ROOD ON FINDING REAL SUPPORT THROUGH THE PHYSICIAN WELLNESS PROGRAM. SEE MEMBER PROFILE ON PAGE 14.

LCMS Biennial PWP Gala Derby Soirée May 2nd



Tickets on Sale! LCMS is proud to host its third biennial fundraising gala benefiting the Physician Wellness Program on Saturday, May 2nd, 2026, at the Eugene Country Club. Join us for an elegant evening featuring dinner, silent and live auctions, races, and games, all in support of physician wellness. The PWP provides confidential counseling and coaching to local physicians, helping combat burnout and care for those who care for our community. LCMS is seeking live auction items and offering sponsorship and table opportunities. To donate, sponsor, or reserve a table, contact info@lcmedsociety.com.

Spring Social Carnival Hosted at Chambers Construction



Last chance! Register for the LCMS Spring Social Carnival on Thursday, March 5th, from 5:30–7:30 PM at Chambers Construction. Join us for an adults-only evening of fun, friendly competition, and connection at Chambers Construction. Enjoy carnival-style games, bites from Moi Poki Grill, beverages, and a chance to win curated raffle prizes, including a Grand Prize Night Out. Registration is required. Scan the QR code or visit lcmedsociety.com to sign up. Bring your colleagues and we’ll see you there!

UPCOMING

Join us on Thursday, April 9th, 2026 from 5:30–7:30 PM at the Eugene Family YMCA for our Lifestyle Medicine & Food as Medicine Nutrition Series, led by Charlie Ross, DO, DipABLM. Discover how nutrition-focused Lifestyle Medicine can enhance patient outcomes, support metabolic health, and equip you with practical tools for lasting, sustainable habits. Register on our website to reserve your spot.



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SCAN ME

The Ripple Effect of Physician Wellness

BY EMILY KEIZER

CASCADE HEALTH, MARKETING & EVENTS MANAGER

Most physicians can point to moments in their careers that stay with them long after the end of the workday: difficult cases, patient loss, or the steady accumulation of stress. While those experiences are often seen as part of the job, they can have lasting effects if physicians don't have a safe place to process them.

In a profession that's all about caring for others, it can be difficult for physicians to prioritize their own mental health – despite compelling evidence that doing so benefits not only individual clinicians but patients, families, and the healthcare system as a whole.

A Hidden Epidemic

The toll of chronic stress among physicians is well documented. National surveys indicate that nearly half of U.S. physicians experience symptoms of burnout. Recent data shows about 45–48% of physicians report at least one burnout symptom. Symptoms spiked during and shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic and remain high relative to other professions.¹

Burnout isn't just a statistic – it comes with real consequences. Research shows that burnout contributes to reduced quality of patient care, increased medical errors, and higher rates of physicians leaving clinical practice altogether.

A national survey found that more than one-third of physicians experiencing burnout were planning to stop seeing patients in the next 1–3 years.²

Like burnout, physician suicide and suicidal ideation are elevated above rates seen in the general population. A survey by the Physicians Foundation found that 55% of physicians know a colleague who has considered, attempted, or died by suicide during their career.³

However, physicians often do not seek help. Studies suggest that only a minority of physicians with mental health concerns actively seek support, in part due to fears about confidentiality, licensure implications, time constraints, and entrenched stigma about asking for help.

A Back Door to Support

These aren't just statistics – they're reality right here in Oregon. Lane County Medical Society established the Physician Wellness Program (PWP) in 2012 after several physician suicides laid bare the need for a safe, confidential support system tailored to physicians and the unique pressures they face.

At its core, the program provides six free counseling sessions per year with experienced professionals through local providers like Cascade Health Counseling & EAP and Joyful Living Counseling. The design intentionally removes barriers: there's strict confidentiality, no insurance billing, and no diagnoses tracked in an electronic medical record.

As Cascade Health Counseling & EAP Assistant Manager Stephanie Evans-Wondra, LPC, says, "The most meaningful aspect of the program is 'anonymity.' Physicians can seek counseling without fear that their career or licensure will be impacted, making it possible to

address stress, grief, and emotional concerns early and safely."

For many participants, that privacy makes all the difference. Manager Jodi DePaoli, LPC, often hears similar feedback from physicians. She summarizes the most common as "It's just so great to have a place to talk where I feel safe, where I can share what I'm going through, the stressors I'm facing, and get feedback and help."

This kind of support is especially powerful in a profession where clinicians shoulder emotional and physical trauma that "we are not trained to process," says Dr. Jeff Sharman, Director of Research for the Willamette Valley Cancer Institute. "Over the course of a career, that burden erodes our resiliency and leaks into our personal lives in ways we do not necessarily understand."

In Sharman's case, the program "was helpful for me as I was going through a difficult time dealing with the loss of a friend to cancer – helping me to understand my reactions and process them in a more healthy way."

What the Program Offers

- Confidential counseling services: six free sessions annually designed to support mental health, improve work-life balance, and reduce burnout.
- Flexible scheduling, including virtual and after-hours options to fit physicians' demanding schedules.
- 24-hour crisis support through Cascade Health for urgent needs.
- No insurance required, allowing physicians autonomy and privacy in care.
- Coaching resources: LCMS

members receive a stipend toward leadership and communication coaching services.

PWP isn't just for emergencies, however. As Evans-Wondra says, "you don't have to be in crisis to use this program. In fact, it's often better if you're not." Addressing stress and burnout early can prevent more serious downstream consequences.

While PWP focuses on individual physician wellness, its impact is far wider. When physicians receive support – whether coping with work stress, grief, or life transitions – it can improve their professional and personal relationships.

Evans-Wondra says, "There's a ripple effect. When a physician is supported, it affects their family, their

practice, and that impacts patients' families and loved ones."

This ripple effect is no small matter in a health system already strained by workforce shortages and high demand. Investing in physician wellness isn't just compassionate; it's essential for sustainable, high-quality care.

Increasing Awareness, Taking Action

The data is clear: burnout and mental health struggles are pervasive in medicine, and reducing stigma around help-seeking remains crucial. Programs like the Physician Wellness Program put much-needed emphasis on the fact that taking care of one's own well-being is not a luxury – it is part of the foundation of compassionate, effective healthcare.◆

The Lane County Medical Society's Physician Wellness Program (PWP) provides confidential, physician-focused support designed to remove barriers to care. Established in 2012, the program offers six free counseling sessions annually, flexible scheduling, crisis support, and coaching resources – all with strict confidentiality and no insurance billing. Physicians are encouraged to access support early. Scan the QR code to learn more.



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2. "Poor Prognosis: More Than One-Third of Burned-Out U.S. Primary Care Physicians Plan to Stop Seeing Patients," The Commonwealth Fund, [commonwealthfund.org/blog/2024/poor-prognosis-more-one-third-burned-out-us-primary-care-physicians-plan-stop-seeing](https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2024/poor-prognosis-more-one-third-burned-out-us-primary-care-physicians-plan-stop-seeing)
3. "Physicians Foundation Survey and Research," The Physicians Foundation, [physiciansfoundation.org](https://www.physiciansfoundation.org)



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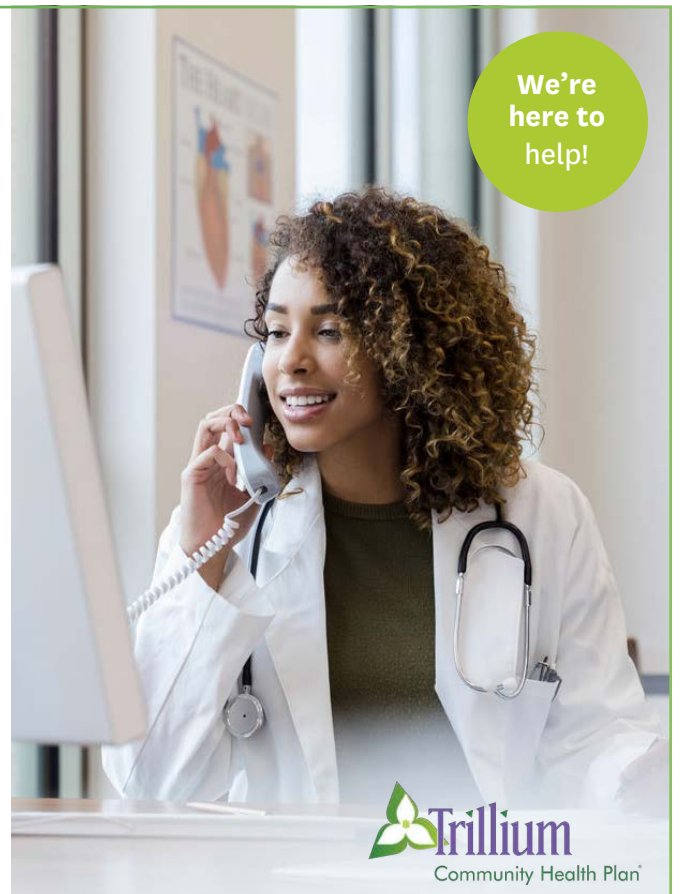
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Returning to Clinical Foundations Through Nutrition

BY CHARLES ROSS, DO, DIPABLM
EUGENE PLANT BASED PROVIDERS

Modern medicine excels at diagnosing and treating disease, yet many of the conditions filling our clinics — cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, gout, and certain cancers — share common upstream drivers: lifestyle and environment. Among modifiable factors, nutrition remains the most powerful and underutilized therapeutic intervention available to clinicians.

As interest in “wellness” grows among patients and the public, physicians have an opportunity to ground this conversation in evidence-based medicine.

Nutrition as Preventive Medicine

The strongest evidence supports dietary patterns rather than isolated nutrients. Large prospective cohort studies and randomized trials consistently demonstrate that whole-food, plant-forward dietary patterns are associated with lower rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and all-cause mortality.^{1,2,3} Dietary patterns associated with improved outcomes typically include:

- High intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds
- Limited consumption of ultra-processed foods, refined carbohydrates, and sugar-sweetened beverages

These patterns influence cardiometabolic risk not only through weight reduction, but also via improvements in endothelial function, inflammation, insulin sensitivity, and lipid metabolism.⁴

Fiber: The Missing Macronutrient

Despite decades of evidence,

fiber intake remains strikingly low. Fewer than five percent of U.S. adults meet recommended intake levels.⁵ Dietary fiber exerts multiple clinically relevant effects:

- Reduction in LDL cholesterol through bile acid binding
- Improved postprandial glucose control and insulin sensitivity
- Enhanced satiety and weight regulation
- Promotion of a healthy gut microbiome

Fermentable fibers are metabolized by colonic bacteria into short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), including butyrate, which influence immune regulation, gut barrier integrity, and incretin signaling, such as endogenous GLP-1 secretion.⁶ This highlights how nutrition can activate physiological pathways now targeted pharmacologically.

Wellness Beyond Diet

Nutrition does not operate in isolation. A comprehensive wellness framework integrates:

- Regular physical activity, including resistance training
- Adequate sleep, which directly affects glucose metabolism and appetite hormones
- Stress management, given the metabolic effects of chronic cortisol elevation
- Social connection, increasingly recognized as a determinant of longevity

When addressed together, these elements act synergistically and may reduce the need for escalating medication therapy in many patients.⁷

Prescription to Advice

Many clinicians hesitate to address nutrition due to time constraints or concern about patient adherence.

However, evidence suggests that brief, focused counseling delivered by physicians can meaningfully influence patient behavior.⁸ Effective strategies include:

- Framing nutrition as treatment, not lifestyle preference
- Making one or two specific recommendations
- Emphasizing additions (more fiber-rich foods) rather than restriction alone
- Normalizing incremental change

Even modest interventions, such as adding one daily serving of legumes or replacing refined grains with intact whole grains, can produce measurable metabolic benefits.

A Physician's Role

Physicians need not become nutrition experts, but we must remain conversant in foundational nutritional science. When clinicians speak with clarity and credibility — and model healthy behaviors — patients are more likely to listen.

As chronic disease continues to dominate healthcare utilization and costs, wellness and nutrition are no longer ancillary topics. They are central to the future of effective, sustainable medical care for all. ♦

www.livelifestylemedicine.com offers free online and in-person classes, shopping tours, community walks, movie nights, potlucks, and counseling to support lasting lifestyle change. The Lane County Medical Society Foundation and Live Lifestyle Medicine will host the Lifestyle Medicine & Food as Medicine Nutrition Series on April 9th, 2026, from 5:30–7:30 pm at the Eugene Family YMCA, with a plant-based meal and practical tools for personal and professional use.

Connecting the Dots: Why Relationships Matter Us

BY JOE SAGE, MD

CANDID MEDICAL LLC

Wellness is an often overused, confusing buzzword. Yet it is something we all want. As physicians, we all want to practice great medicine while living our own lives authentically and in a way that honors our values. One of our shared core values is that life is precious and people matter.

To be clear, physicians are people! In Lane County, the epidemic of physician burnout combined with physician suicide deaths spurred LCMS and the medical community to create the LCMS Physician Wellness Program. It is a bold effort to translate our shared values — that life is precious, and physicians matter — into a commitment to improve physician wellness.

Physician well-being is a topic that evokes strong emotions and a sense of urgency. This sense of urgency can mislead physicians into thinking they are wellness experts.¹ That's when we see doctors apply anecdotal evidence to the important, systemic challenge of improving physician wellness. If you are on a quest for more balance, less burnout, greater well-being, or a sustainable career, I invite you to keep reading.

What is the most important facet of a life full of purpose and meaning? Positive psychology says it is positive relationships.² According to the Blue Zones®, people with well-being feel like they belong, they put Loved

“What many physicians describe as burnout is actually loneliness... [it] does not respond to burnout interventions. It improves when we build relationships.”

Ones First, and they find the Right Tribe.³ The Ornish lifestyle that can reverse coronary artery disease, some prostate cancer, and early Alzheimer's only works when we combine the diet and exercise recommendations with emotional well-being and loving others.⁴ In other words, the most important step to wellness is nurturing some deep, positive social connections.

When a physician is lonely, the rest of the world will not make sense to them. What's more, a person can be lonely in the midst of a marriage, whilst engaged with social media, and despite having a bustling medical practice. What many physicians describe as “burnout” is actually loneliness. Loneliness is interesting because it is both a feeling and a real thing.

This has several implications. First, people who feel lonely have worse outcomes than people who are lonely but don't define themselves as lonely.⁵ As we discussed earlier, feelings can evoke unintended, negative responses. My recommendation is that people assess how their exposure to music, arts, and social media impacts their feelings of connection and loneliness. For people who identify as lonely,

consider what it will be like to develop a different identity.

Second, lonely people can remedy that situation by intentionally building positive social connections. Loneliness does not respond to interventions for depression, work culture, or burnout. It improves when we build relationships. My physician clients often explore the juxtaposition of practicing great medicine while also nurturing relationships.

For most of us, living authentically means we have time with family, friends, and our community.

We are relational beings. Together, we can improve physician wellness by addressing the loneliness pandemic. We can form friendships with our colleagues.

As an advocacy organization, LCMS gives us opportunities to informally gather and bond with each other. LCMS also gives us space to find our collective voice. We can use this voice to commit to workplace practices that give us the time and space to interact with ourselves, our family, and communities. ♦

Joe Sage, MD, FAAP, FACP, DipABLM
Transformational Physician Coach
www.candidmedical.com

1. Dr. Joe: Physicians are *un-sickness* experts.

2. “Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being,” Seligman, M. E. P., Atria (2013)

3. “The Power 9®,” Blue Zones, bluezones.com/2016/11/power-9/

4. Ornish Lifestyle Medicine, ornish.com

5. Fredrickson, B., Love 2.0: How our supreme emotion affects everything we feel, think, do, and become. Gildan Media Corp. (2013)



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Dr. Sandra Rood and her husband, Tyler Grissom, enjoying a stroll with their puppy, Maple, at 5th Street Alley in Eugene.

Photos provided by Angel Montes



MEMBER PROFILE

Caring for the Caregivers

Dr. Sandra Rood on why confidential support is essential to sustaining physicians and the care they provide.

BY VANESSA SALVIA
FOR LANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY

Dr. Sandra Rood has spent two decades caring for the children of Lane County. As Associate Medical Director for Pediatrics and Behavioral Health, Director of Laboratory Services, and a practicing general pediatrician at Community Health Centers of Lane County, she is busy, but it is her unwavering commitment to the Physician Wellness Program (PWP) – one of the first of its kind in the nation – that reveals what she has learned about what it actually takes to sustain a satisfying life in medicine.

Rood has a childhood memory of being in a clinic, on her mother's lap, while her physician examined her tummy. She also remembers the stick of bubble gum she got to pick as her reward. As a teenager, she transferred to the doctor's wife, who was also a physician at the same clinic, so she could be seen by a female doctor.

"Those kinds of things really influenced me from a young age," she says, "but I knew I wanted to do something with children before I knew I wanted to be a doctor."

Rood grew up between Kansas and Michigan, completed nearly all of her training in Michigan, and relocated to Oregon after residency, drawn by the state and by family. The warmth that she remembers from her childhood pediatricians is something she still carries into her own clinic rooms: attentiveness, consistency, and the small gestures that children remember. “I love that I am that for some people now,” she says.

Her role at CHCLC is divided roughly 50/50 between direct patient care and administrative leadership. On the administrative side, she oversees pediatrics, integrated behavioral health, and laboratory services, but there’s no fine line between her duties. “Sometimes I’ll be in my office just working, and somebody shows up and needs to be seen,” she says. “I’m always ready to jump up and pitch in.”

The Supervision Gap

Over 20 years, she has seen thousands of individual patients, and she remembers most of them. Families who encountered her years ago find her at CHCLC and tell her, “You saw me when I was small,” or “You saw my child when they were a baby.” For Rood, those moments are among the most meaningful.

But working with children is also an ongoing challenge. Children’s services receive less funding and less policy attention than adult services. Finding mental health resources for a young child is harder than finding them for an adult, and the younger the child, the harder the search.

Many medications were not studied in children when Rood trained, making off-label prescribing a more common point of discussion. Those cases — when children who cannot be helped — don’t stay at the clinic. They

“I try to identify people who can be mentors, people who can be friends that are in the same line of work or closely aligned areas of work, and those people I can feel really free to share information with...”

follow the physician home and add weight to their everyday life. At the same time, she knows it’s a privilege to be present for a family during what may be the worst experience of their lives.

“When pediatrics is good, it’s amazing, and it’s amazing 99% of the time,” she says. “The one percent of the time that’s difficult is when a child is very sick or dies, or when a child is abused. Families don’t expect to lose a child, ever, so it’s always a complicated system to navigate.”

“Creating your own support network is something we know is associated with longevity and happiness, and I think it is critical.”

The Hidden Burden

Across specialties, physicians must absorb the pain of losing patients they couldn’t help. This is just one emotional burden physicians face. Rood points out that integrated behavioral health colleagues have something called clinical supervision to help them manage the emotional burden of their workload.

“In the mental health world, supervision means working with

someone who is more experienced than you typically, but also can give you advice,” Rood says. “They can listen to how things are impacting you. Maybe a sick child is the exact age of your child, and that has a greater impact on you.”

Medicine has no equivalent, and she argues that physicians need one. “But, we can create it for ourselves in some ways,” she says. “I try to identify people who can be mentors, people who can be friends that are in the same line of work or closely aligned areas of work, and those people I can feel really free to share information with. I know they’ll keep it private, and I can really kind of be myself and let things go.”

In addition to losing herself in her hobbies — reading, a book group, yoga, needlework, and gardening — Rood relies on her family, especially her husband, for emotional support. “Creating your own support network is something we know is associated with longevity and happiness, and I think it is critical.”

A Program Born from Loss

Lane County Medical Society’s groundbreaking PWP emerged because many physicians never found the support network they needed. It has since been duplicated by the state of Oregon and across the nation. Before the program existed, several physicians in the Lane County medical community died by suicide. One of them was a colleague and fellow pediatrician whom Rood describes as a dear friend. The cluster of deaths

forced a reckoning.

“Doctors are real. Doctors might be struggling,” Rood says. “Doctors are really good at pretending they’re not struggling — even to themselves.”

The PWP provides a way for physicians to privately and confidentially make appointments to support their mental health with providers who understand the culture and demands of medicine. The privacy element is important. When a physician needs mental health support, seeking it locally through typical outlets usually means encountering people they know, either as coworkers or friends.

“I’ve talked to physicians who are having a mental health crisis who feel like they need to drive to another city to get help,” Rood says. The PWP directly addresses the perception that local care is unsafe by offering a

level of confidentiality that standard clinical settings cannot match.

“Having something that is private, that is reliable, with competent providers who understand what physicians are going through is really valuable,” Rood says. “It’s so good to have a team of people that are really devoted to working with physicians that are able to give us that support.”

Making Time to Be Human

Minimizing or not recognizing burnout is an ongoing challenge. Rood traces this to the medical culture in which physicians of her generation were trained: Patients come first. Medicine is a calling. You’re running from task to task and may not even have time to go to the bathroom. “We really were taught this,” she says.

The result is that physicians

may not recognize burnout until it has become so severe that it can’t be ignored. Continuing on, not burdening others, resolving it internally — none of those are solutions. Rood’s prescription is clear: Don’t wait for insight or for something to change; schedule the space.

“What will it take for you to set aside a time in your day?” she asks. “An hour of the day, half an hour of the day. It could be a time that you’re with a friend, but you really identify that as a time to talk about your needs. It could be a professional. It could be with one of the life coaches from the Physician Wellness Program. It could be a life coach you found independently, but you’re forcing yourself to take that time and really do an honest evaluation — because this is your one life.”◆



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Improving Operations: Dr. Rishi Vora's PLP Journey

BY RISHI VORA, DO
PACIFIC SPORTS AND SPINE

What initially drew you to participate in the Physician Leadership Program (PLP)?

I learned about the PLP while my practice was working with Jill Arena, who is the CEO of Health e Practices. My partners at work had completed their course, and when the opportunity for a local cohort was organized, I was excited to participate.

What were the most valuable aspects of the program for you?

I found the greatest benefit in engaging with other physicians in my community to discuss shared challenges and develop practical solutions to the challenges we discussed. I learned a great deal from physicians in similar private practice environments while also gaining valuable insights from those in different settings.

What would you say was your biggest takeaway?

I particularly enjoyed the Personalis assessment. It helped me better understand my decision-making process and how it differs from my partners'. It showed me how people can view situations differently, even with the same goals in mind.

How did the program challenge or shift your perspective on leadership?

The program introduced new ways for me to engage and communicate more effectively with my staff and at the executive team level.

Can you share a bit about your PLP project? What was the focus?

My project focused on same-day cancellations of procedures and surgeries. I tracked cancellations and implemented a series of workflow and



Dr. Rishi Vora marks his 100th Intracept procedure alongside his outstanding team at Pacific Sports and Spine in February 2026.

process improvements. The results showed a decrease in cancellation rates, which increased the likelihood of improved patient satisfaction. Physicians in my practice frequently expressed frustration about cancellations and unused time, but that improved as well, along with revenue.

How have you applied what you learned in your work or leadership?

I have gained additional tools to strengthen communication with my medical team. The program has also given me the confidence to pursue other leadership roles.

In what ways has the program influenced your approach to physician wellness – personally or within your organization?

The PLP demonstrated the importance of excellence in both medicine and the business of medicine. Serving in a leadership role – especially within an independent group – gives me the opportunity to shape the environment we create for our practice.

Why would you recommend the PLP to other physicians?

Business training and leadership development are not typically part of medical education, so I found the PLP to be extremely valuable. I would highly recommend it for physicians who are entering – or already serving in –

leadership roles.

Looking ahead, what are you most excited about at Pacific Sports and Spine as the practice continues to expand?

I'm excited about opening our new Springfield clinic on Beverly Street this spring, expanding into newer procedures for chronic pain relief, and offering more clinical trials.

How do you see your PLP takeaways supporting that growth and future direction?

As we expand and introduce new services, I have a better framework for evaluating decisions and working with our executive team.

Do you have any other insights?

You can make a difference in a small community. It's important that we continue to advocate for and support physician-owned practices in Eugene.◆

The Physician Leadership Project (PLP) is a year-long, CME-accredited, cohort-based program designed to equip physicians with essential leadership, communication, finance, and management skills often absent from clinical training – empowering them to strengthen practice operations, guide teams effectively, and advance healthcare delivery. Learn more at physicianlp.org or contact info@physicianlp.org.

Photo provided by Dr. Risha Vora

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Finish the Ride: Elevating Suzanne Arlie Park

BY ARIEL LISSMAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
EUGENE PARKS FOUNDATION

Physician burnout is no longer a future concern — it is a present reality. Long hours, workforce shortages, and increasing administrative demands make it harder than ever for physicians to sustain the physical and mental well-being their work requires.

Increasingly, communities that retain healthcare professionals are those that invest not only in clinical infrastructure, but in environments that support recovery, movement, and balance outside of work.

Eugene has long stood out for its access to nature, and a new project underway at Suzanne Arlie Park builds directly on that strength. At the park, the City of Eugene is developing a foundational mountain bike trail system that includes a central trailhead, a skills park, and a network of trails designed for all ages and abilities.

Finish the Ride, led by Eugene Parks Foundation, is the final step: funding the last four advanced trails and three trail hubs that will transform the park into a premier, statewide mountain biking destination.

Recreation as a Wellness Tool

For many physicians, outdoor recreation is more than a hobby — it is essential to resilience. As Andy McIvor, MD, shares, “Getting exercise while out in nature really helps me recharge. It takes my mind off of work, keeps me healthy and gives me an endorphin high. I have hiked and biked the new Suzanne Arlie Park several times, and am watching the trails get built. It is exciting to anticipate a mountain bike park so close to town.”

Access to outdoor recreation is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for physician wellness. Regular



Map of Finish the Ride, highlighting advanced trail expansions at Suzanne Arlie Park.

physical activity reduces stress, improves sleep, supports cardiovascular health, and provides a critical outlet for decompressing after demanding clinical work.

Dusty McCourt, DPM, highlights how directly wellness carries into clinical care, “everyday I ride my bike makes me a better person. This shows up granularly with patient care. I’m looking forward to lunch laps at Suzanne Arlie!”



Suzanne Arlie Mountain Bike Park Trail

When complete, Suzanne Arlie Park will feature eleven mountain bike trails and three hubs, offering a full progression from beginner routes to advanced, feature-rich descents. The hubs create places to pause, connect, and reset — turning the park into a space not just for exercise, but for mental restoration and community connection.

Workforce Retention

Physician wellness and workforce retention are deeply connected. Healthcare professionals increasingly choose where to practice based on quality of life, access to recreation, and opportunities for their families to thrive. Communities that invest in wellness infrastructure send a clear signal: we value the people who care for us.

A completed, destination-quality mountain bike park strengthens Eugene’s ability to attract and retain physicians, nurses, and healthcare staff. It enhances the region’s appeal to providers considering relocation and supports those already practicing here by offering a meaningful way to recharge outside of work.

For medical groups competing nationally for talent, assets like Suzanne Arlie Park help position Eugene as a sustainable, prosperous work-play community.

Why Timing Matters

Construction at Suzanne Arlie Park is already underway and will continue through 2026. The remaining work — the final four trails and three hubs — can be completed alongside current construction if private funding is secured by the end of March.

Meeting this deadline allows the

Photos provided by Ariel Lissman

PHYSICIAN WELLNESS

entire mountain bike park to open together by Thanksgiving 2026, ensuring a complete experience rather than a phased rollout – and maximizing its immediate impact on community health, physician wellness, and workforce stability.◆

Supporting Finish the Ride extends the principles of prevention, movement, and recovery beyond the clinic—helping create a destination that strengthens physician well-being, patient care, and the region’s healthcare workforce. Available founding sponsorship levels currently include: Trail Hub Sponsor: \$25,000, Trail Sponsor: \$15,000, Community Sponsor: \$5,000–\$14,000 To learn more about FINISH THE RIDE, please visit www.eugeneparksfoundation.org/finish-the-ride or contact Ariel Lissman at ariel@eugeneparksfoundation.org.

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Resident Physicians Deserve to Learn in a Culture of Well-being

BY GEORGIA GARVEY

SENIOR NEWS WRITER, THE AMA

Attending physicians do more than guide residents and fellows in the art of practicing medicine. They are also teaching them how to bring even more meaning to their work, and how to prioritize their own well-being for their benefit, and also for the good of their families, friends and patients — even their employers.

“We’re ingraining in our trainees what they’re going to do for their entire careers, and as we all know, we as a profession are not good at taking care of ourselves,” says Ryan Pong, MD, a neuroanesthesiologist and vice president and chief academic officer at Virginia Mason Franciscan Health. “Our residents and our medical students are listening, and they are coming to us more primed than ever to be in tune with what they need to be successful, to have a long-lasting career without burnout.”

Virginia Mason Franciscan Health (VMFH), based in the Pacific Northwest, is part of the AMA Health System Member Program, which provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to help drive the future of medicine.

VMFH has 15 physician-training programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) across all of its sites, and aiding more than 225 residents and fellows in those programs with their well-being has been a focus of VMFH’s burnout-prevention efforts.

As with all physicians, resident burnout rates have fallen from some of the stratospheric heights seen in recent years. But work remains to be done, with a recently released national survey showing about half of residents and fellows reporting symptoms of burnout.

As the leader in physician well-being, the AMA is reducing physician burnout by removing administrative burdens and providing real-world solutions to help doctors rediscover the Joy in Medicine®.

Going Beyond the Minimum

Before the ACGME limited residents’ workweeks to 80 hours in 2003, Pong says physicians in training would often put in 110 or 120 hours of work a week. The issue clearly needed to be tackled, but for VMFH, the basics of complying with shorter resident duty hours aren’t enough to sustain resident well-being.

“Limiting it to 80 hours is a good starting place, but that’s not the only thing that we ought to be doing,” Pong says. “Well-being also focuses on: What’s the meaning in your work? Is the meaning aligned with what you are here to do as a physician?”

VMFH also seeks to eliminate what the AMA has called “the pebble in the shoe” — the everyday annoyances that make it harder for physicians to practice medicine — deploying strategies from the Toyota Production System management philosophy that seeks to eliminate waste. This is where the globally-recognized Virginia Mason Production System was born.

“There is efficiency in practice, there is efficiency in the work that we’re doing, and that makes for more meaningful days filled with satisfaction of being able to have more face-to-face time with our patients,” Pong says.

Coming From a Place of Trust

Well-being—or lack thereof—can permeate workplaces, which include physician residency programs. When it comes to organizational culture, Pong says it’s crucial to create an environment of trust, one where residents aren’t afraid to ask questions or

admit there’s something they don’t know.

“Virginia Mason Franciscan Health is a very collegial place to work, and you never really feel alone,” he says. Residents “know that they can always go to their faculty or anybody and ask for help because it’s a natural environment of learning that we have here.”

It’s more than seeking to have their own questions answered, though. Residents also need to feel comfortable speaking out. Pong recounted one memorable experience in which a thoracic surgeon, just before beginning an incision, asked the residents which of them would have stopped him if he had been about to remove the wrong lung. He wanted them to feel empowered to question even an experienced supervising physician.

It’s about “creating that environment where a learner, anybody in the team can say: Hey, wait a minute. This doesn’t make sense,” Pong says. “That psychological safety is so, so important.”

What Attending Physicians Should Remember

There aren’t just one-way well-being benefits, though, to the relationships between learners and leaders. Pong says the very act of teaching residents can help attending physicians find meaning in their own work.

“There’s just really something inherently amazing about seeing the light go on in someone’s eyes, and knowing that what you’re telling them in this moment is not just going to affect this patient, but it’s going to affect every single patient that this person, this student, this resident in front of you, is going to take care of for the rest of their careers,” he says. “And you’ve inspired that.”◆

Adapted from American Medical Association. Full article at ama-assn.org.

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Welcome to LCMS! We're excited to welcome our newest physician members. Visit the LCMS website for events or email info@lcmedsociety.com.

LCMS Events

Tickets are now on sale for the LCMS Derby Soirée on May 2nd, 2026 at the Eugene Country Club. Join us for an elegant and fun evening benefiting the Physician Wellness Program. Enjoy dinner, auctions, races, and games in support of physician wellness

Email info@lcmedsociety.com for sponsorship inquiries or questions.



Community

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Dr. Jocelyn Bonner is as a volunteer psychiatry consultant for Assoc. Saint Camille, a full-service mental health NGO

serving Benin, Togo, and Ivory Coast, and is seeking medical supplies to support their work. For more information, visit www.treatmentnotchains.org or contact treatmentnotchains.org@gmail.com.

Help Dr. Nick Jones raise funds for the St. Baldrick's Foundation and support childhood cancer research!

Join him on March 7th, from 3-5 PM at Claim 52 Brewing for an afternoon supporting and celebrating local families, featuring games, crafts, live music, and a silent auction. Once \$1,000 is raised, he will shave his head! Head shaving begins at 4:30 PM. See you there!

Join the Women Physicians Group on March 19th at 6:30 PM at Springfield Public House. For questions, please email info@lcmedsociety.com.

NOTES

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