

# The Effects of Paid Clinical Employment Prior to Medical School Matriculation on Happiness & Overall Well-being During Residency

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**Introduction.** Burnout among resident-physicians is correlated with increased medical errors, job dissatisfaction, depression, and suicide. Despite efforts to combat burnout, data indicates it continues to increase among U.S. physicians. Suggested by limited studies, medical career exposure and perceived clinical skills aptitude correlates with job satisfaction. The present study hypothesized a beneficial relationship exists between prior clinical experience and overall wellbeing during residency.

**Methods.** A cross-sectional and quasi-experimental study was completed at the University of Kansas Medical Center, utilizing the Professional Quality of Life (ProQoL) scale to measure resident physicians' Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Satisfaction, and Burnout.

**Results.** Item analyses of 51 resident-physicians determined that 33% of responders' past clinical experience influenced their choice of residency specialty; however, influence did not differ by clinical experience ( $\chi^2 = 0.2$ ,  $p = 0.9$ ). Our data discovered a trend towards decreased frequency of low Secondary Traumatic Stress rating with increased clinical experience ( $\chi^2 = 5.6$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ). Of note, none of the resident responders scored in a pathologic range for Burnout, Secondary Traumatic Stress, or Compassion Satisfaction, though we did find 47% of female responders and 75% of male responders scored in the low range for Secondary Traumatic Stress ( $\chi^2 = 3.1$ ,  $p = 0.08$ ).

**Conclusions.** Evidenced through our study, the level of prior clinical experience was not related to Burnout or Compassion Satisfaction; yet, increasing professional responsibility in a clinical care setting was associated with significantly higher ratings for Secondary Traumatic Stress, especially in female respondents. Our results theorize clinical experience prior to medical school may contribute to psychological burden risk as future resident-physicians.