

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 425  
(A-24)

Introduced by: Women Physicians Section

Subject: Perinatal Mental Health Disorders among Medical Students and Physicians

Referred to: Reference Committee D

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- 1 Whereas, perinatal mental health disorders contribute to 23 percent of maternal deaths; and  
2  
3 Whereas, one in eight women experience postpartum depression, which is a common perinatal  
4 mental health disorder; and  
5  
6 Whereas, the DSM-V notes postpartum depression to be as a major depressive episode with  
7 onset of symptoms within 4 weeks of delivery; and  
8  
9 Whereas, clinical research shows postpartum depression may occur up to 12 months after  
10 delivery; and  
11  
12 Whereas, an estimated 80% of female physicians become mothers; and  
13  
14 Whereas, 6.5% to 20% of women in the general population develop postpartum depression; and  
15  
16 Whereas, resident physicians have reported a nearly four times greater rate of postpartum  
17 depression than the general population; and  
18  
19 Whereas, the rate of matriculation of female students into medical school in 2022 was 55.6%  
20 and has been increasing every year; and  
21  
22 Whereas, many physicians report lack of support during both pregnancy and the postpartum  
23 period by both colleagues and their workplace; and  
24  
25 Whereas, symptoms of postpartum depression are noted to be worse in jobs where women  
26 perceive a decreased sense of control over both work-life and family-life or jobs with less  
27 flexibility; and  
28  
29 Whereas, female physicians have reported feeling discriminated at the workplace based on their  
30 status as mothers; and  
31  
32 Whereas, untreated postpartum depression severely affects a woman's ability to return to  
33 normal function and results in poorer outcomes for both the mother and infant; and  
34  
35 Whereas, 63% of physicians report symptoms or signs of burnout at least once per week in  
36 2021; and  
37  
38 Whereas, suicide is a major cause of mortality for physicians relative to the general public; and  
39  
40 Whereas, untreated postpartum depression is a risk factor for suicide; and

1 Whereas, physicians are less likely to seek treatment for mental health conditions for fear of  
2 repercussions; and

3  
4 Whereas, postpartum depression often goes untreated due to concern from the mother for  
5 stigma; and

6  
7 Whereas, factors that help patients with postpartum depression include maternal-infant bonding,  
8 familial and societal support, and maternal rest; therefore be it

9  
10 RESOLVED, that our American Medical Association work with relevant stakeholders to identify  
11 ways to increase screening for perinatal mental health conditions and reduce stigma  
12 surrounding the diagnosis and treatment of perinatal mental health conditions (Directive to Take  
13 Action); and be it further

14  
15 RESOLVED, that our AMA advocate for reducing structural and systemic barriers to the  
16 diagnosis and treatment of perinatal mental health conditions in physicians and medical  
17 students. (Directive to Take Action)

18  
Fiscal Note: Modest - between \$1,000 - \$5,000

Received: 5/3/2024

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## RELEVANT AMA POLICY

### **Improving Mental Health Services for Pregnant and Postpartum Mothers H-420.953**

Our AMA will: (1) support improvements in current mental health services during pregnancy and postpartum periods; (2) support advocacy for inclusive insurance coverage of and sufficient payment for mental health services during gestation, and extension of postpartum mental health services coverage to one year postpartum; (3) support appropriate organizations working to improve awareness and education among patients, families, and providers of the risks of mental illness during gestation and postpartum; (4) continue to advocate for funding programs that address perinatal and postpartum depression, anxiety and psychosis, and substance use disorder through research, public awareness, and support programs; and (5) advocate for evidence-based postpartum depression screening and prevention services to be recognized as the standard of care for all federally-funded health care programs for persons who are pregnant or in a postpartum state. [Res. 102, A-12; Modified: Res. 503, A-17; Modified: Res. 227, A-23]

### **Study of Medical Student, Resident, and Physician Suicide D-345.983**

Our AMA will: (1) explore the viability and cost-effectiveness of regularly collecting National Death Index (NDI) data and confidentially maintaining manner of death information for physicians, residents, and medical students listed as deceased in the AMA Physician Masterfile for long-term studies; (2) monitor progress by the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) to collect data on medical student and resident/fellow suicides to identify patterns that could predict such events; (3) support the education of faculty members, residents and medical students in the recognition of the signs and symptoms of burnout and depression and supports access to free, confidential, and immediately available stigma-free mental health and substance use disorder services; (4) collaborate with other stakeholders to study the incidence of and risk factors for depression, substance misuse and substance use disorders, and attempted and completed suicide among physicians, residents, and medical students; and (5) work with appropriate stakeholders to explore the viability of developing a standardized reporting mechanism for the collection of current wellness initiatives that institutions have in place to inform and promote meaningful mental health and wellness interventions in these populations. [CME Rep. 06, A-19; Modified: Res. 326, A-22]

### **Factors Causing Burnout H-405.948**

Our AMA recognizes that medical students, resident physicians, and fellows face unique challenges that contribute to burnout during medical school and residency training, such as debt burden, inequitable compensation, discrimination, limited organizational or institutional support, stress, depression, suicide, childcare needs, mistreatment, long work and study hours, among others, and that such factors be included as metrics when measuring physician well-being, particularly for this population of physicians. [Res. 208, I-22]