



80 PERCENT OF PRIMARY CARE CLINICIANS SAY THEIR LEVEL OF BURNOUT IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH

PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, June 18, 2020 – The Larry A. Green Center, in collaboration with the Primary Care Collaborative (PCC) and 3rd Conversation, today released new data showing that more than 80 percent of primary care clinicians say professional burnout is at an all-time high and only one in five feels they have the resources or support needed to cope with COVID-19-related stress. Alarming, 65 percent of clinicians also report that their own families are feeling the impacts of these stress levels.

This data comes at a time when financial burdens for primary care practices are at record levels, with face-to-face patient volume down by 50 percent, and many offices forced to close. In addition, while telehealth has helped facilitate some patient visits, a significant percentage of clinicians have been denied reimbursement for telehealth visits. In addition, for many practices, virtual health is not making up economically for the loss of face-to-face visits.

“This week’s survey data should sound a loud and resounding alarm to anyone with even the smallest stake in maintaining the long-term viability of primary care in the United States,” said Rebecca Etz, PhD, co-director of The Larry A. Green Center. “If we want to protect primary care and ensure it is there for us both now and long after COVID-19, clinicians must feel stable in their work environment, have resources available to deal with the toll COVID-19 is leveling, and ensure their practices can keep their doors open.”

The survey conducted by the Larry A. Green Center is part of an ongoing series looking at the attitudes of primary care clinicians and patients over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. This week’s data also showed that more than three months into the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 30 percent of practices had severely limited access to PPE and nearly 50 percent of practices that have PPE are re-using it for weeks at time due to shortages.

“Without immediate public and private payer action to stabilize primary care in the short-term and to strengthen it in the long-term, primary care will not readily survive the next wave of the pandemic,” said Ann Greiner, president and CEO of the Primary Care Collaborative. “Without a strong, robust foundation of primary care, more patients will end up in the hospital and ED – this will be costly, potentially unsafe and very disruptive to patients and families.”

Patients care deeply about the personal health and wellbeing of their providers. Our ongoing survey results also reveal how devastated patients would be if their primary care practice had to close its doors,” said Christine Bechtel, patient advocate and co-founder of 3rd Conversation. “These extraordinarily high levels of burnout combined with already shuttering clinics is going to fuel a massive exodus of talented people from the profession of primary care for good. When providers leave the profession in droves because they are either laid off or burned out – or both – that is going to leave patients high and dry during their time of greatest need. The moment for policymakers and payers to intervene and protect primary care – for the people of primary care and their patients – is right now,” she said.

The survey of clinicians was fielded June 12-15 and received 763 responses from clinicians in 49 states and Washington, D.C. 67% of respondents identified their practice as family medicine, 11% as internal medicine, 6% as pediatrics, 4% as geriatrics, and 12% as other.

This week, clinician survey respondents shared additional insights into the startling reality they are facing, including:

- I am becoming depressed with each passing day. I think about killing myself every day. – Washington
- I feel like giving up. I care so much for my patients but how long can I keep this up? – Delaware

- I suspect that in another year, the family medicine practice I served over the past 23 years will be closed. – Wisconsin
- Physician suicide, burnout, I'm seeing it happen. – Michigan
- Nerve wracking and depressing as hours get cut back and my daughter wonders if I will get COVID-19 and die. – Texas
- No one cares. We are in this alone. – Illinois
- I feel like I was hung out to dry. Take chances with my health or abandon my patients were my only choices. – New York.
- Burnout is significant. Compounded by the enormous emotional weight will be dangerous. Please help. – Connecticut
- Our leadership doesn't care about us. – Michigan
- We are alone, patients are alone, we spend all our financial savings, and no one cares for us. – Massachusetts

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About the Primary Care Collaborative:

Founded in 2006, the [Primary Care Collaborative](#) (PCC) is a nonprofit multi-stakeholder membership organization dedicated to advancing an effective and efficient health system built on a strong foundation of primary care and the patient-centered medical home. Representing a broad group of public and private organizations, PCC's mission is to unify and engage diverse stakeholders in promoting policies and sharing best practices that support growth of high-performing primary care and achieve the "Quadruple Aim": better care, better health, lower costs, and greater joy for clinicians and staff in delivery of care.

About The Green Center:

The Larry A. Green Center for the Advancement of Primary Health Care for the Public Good is a research group founded by Rebecca Etz, PhD at Virginia Commonwealth University and Kurt Stange, MD, PhD at Case Western Reserve University. The Green Center works to reclaim and reconstitute the intellectual foundations of primary care, to advance the science of medicine learned and practiced within layered and competing social frameworks of meaning, and to deliver on a now 50 year old promise: better health and improved health care through a synergistic focus on both humanism and healing. We are nimble, inquisitive, curious, and open. We make personal doctoring and innovation visible.

About 3rd Conversation:

[3rd Conversation](#) is a national initiative reimagining the future of health care by reinventing the clinician-patient relationship for the modern era. Powered by X4 Health, 3rd Conversation works at both the local and national levels to address health professional burnout, improve patient experience and realize the promise of humanity and connection in our health care system. Funding support is provided by the Morris-Singer Foundation and the New York State Health Foundation.