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How Do We Prevent Burnout in the Healthcare System?

An interview with University of Toronto researchers:

Zubin Austin, Professor and Chair of Pharmacy Management

Jennifer Lake, PhD Graduate Student

and **Naomi Steenhoff**, PhD Graduate Student

Zubin Austin

One of the most gratifying things about my research is the opportunity to collaborate with a wide array of different individuals. When we look at the healthcare system, the success or failure of patient care is very much tied to the success or failure of the people that provide patient care.

Jennifer Lake

I'm a big believer in teams and teamwork. A primary care team has a lot of different types of professionals on it: physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners. Patients benefit when they have the same providers for a long period of time. People are happier. There's less burnout when they're on teams where they feel valued, where they know they're contributing, if they're working well together, if they're a high-efficiency team. That will actually help impact healthcare costs. We'll be able to deliver better care or more care with the same money that we're already putting in. And that's a huge impact in Canada because we spent a lot of money on healthcare. It's a big line item.



What challenges lie ahead in your field?

Naomi Steenhoff

What I like to think about largely in the healthcare system is just how rapidly everything is changing, and that happens generally in the world, but particularly in healthcare. So when I'm teaching my students, I have to not just be concerned about teaching them facts and things that they need to know right now, but how am I going to prepare them for 30 years in the future when there's medications or technologies that I'm not even aware of right now? We're spending a lot of money on these new medications and technologies, but if we're not thinking about how to train practitioners to be able to utilize them appropriately, society may not end up seeing the benefits that they could.

Zubin Austin

As policies change, finding a way of bringing all of these different groups together and helping them to see that our work should be aligned in a way that allows us to all row in the same direction is a really gratifying part of what I get to do.