



# Translating the Value of Clinician Wellness to Organizational Wellness: Lehigh Valley Health Network

## Value-based Care Activity

- Participated in Track 1 of the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) since 2015
- Six value-based contracts, inclusive of Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, commercial, and commercial exchange
- Contracts include global or shared risk, and shared savings payment models
- 240,000 attributed lives and growing

**Accountable Care Atlas Competency:** Identify and engage provider network

## BACKGROUND

Physician – and, more generally, clinician – wellness has never been more important to health care organizations. [Burnout](#) can be characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism and depersonalization, and loss of professional satisfaction. The origins and consequences of burnout have been [documented](#) extensively, and the financial cost in turnover and reductions in clinical activity is estimated at [\\$4.6B](#) per year in the US. The American Medical Association provides a [calculator](#) that estimates organizational costs and benefits of interventions to attenuate burnout. The unprecedented stressors brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have only intensified the need to invest in and cultivate wellness and resilience in the medical workforce.

In 2016, Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) began administering the [Maslach Burnout Inventory](#) to their medical staff and discovered their overall rate of burnout was higher than the national average (roughly 52% versus 48%). A repeat administration of the inventory in 2017 returned an even higher rate of burnout and resulted in action at several levels including the formation of the Medical Staff Wellness Committee. While the results were likely due, at least in part, to situational stressors associated with scaling up a new electronic health record (EHR) and rapid organizational growth, the imperative for action was established. In 2019, Dr. Joseph Patruno became the LVHN Chief Wellness Officer, with a keen interest in the topic after previously serving as the president of the medical staff. Recognizing that the impact of clinician wellbeing goes beyond a measured outcome of attrition to include organizational measures of wellbeing – such as quality metrics, safety/risk scores, and patient experience – Dr. Patruno introduced the [Mayo Clinic Well Being Index](#) (WBI; which is validated to the Maslach Inventory) and launched a systematic program for monitoring and responding to measures of clinician wellness at LVHN.

## APPROACH

For LVHN, measurement is key. The WBI is an anonymous, web-based survey that is administered routinely at LVHN. Clinicians receive quarterly reminders to complete the survey and are incentivized with a modest cash reward for submitting their responses and using resources. Respondents are able to review current and trended personal assessment information, (along with certain network and nationwide cohort benchmarks above a minimum denominator threshold of five) and receive confidential and personalized resource and tool recommendations. To date, over 2,000 clinicians have completed over 10,000 surveys. While currently available to all physicians and advanced practice clinicians, the plan is to expand the survey to dental and nursing staff within the next year.

The aggregated data are compiled into annual reports that are reviewed by the Wellness Committee and other organizational leadership. These reports formally analyze the results alongside measures of engagement, attrition, and patient experience scores. The data can be stratified by a number of categories (e.g., division, sex, years of practice, etc.) and compared with benchmarks. Reports are delivered, along with recommendations, to department heads who use root cause analyses to create strategic plans with action items to address any areas

## ABOUT LEHIGH VALLEY HEALTH NETWORK

[Lehigh Valley Health Network](#) (LVHN) comprises eight hospital campuses and over 2,000 employed primary and specialty care physicians practicing in ambulatory care and urgent-type ExpressCARE sites across seven counties in Eastern Pennsylvania. LVHN has been recognized for excellence in care from organizations such as [Leapfrog](#), [Vizient](#), and [US News & World Report](#). In 2019, the [LVHN ACO](#) scored better than the ACO mean for greater than 70 percent of reported MSSP quality measures.

## KEY LEARNINGS

- Clinician wellness intersects with value-based care in terms of impacts on efficiency and quality and ultimately, patient care.
- Wellness matters to the whole organization – the benefits of clinician well-being extend from the individuals themselves and affects measures with financial impact including risk, safety, quality, and patient experience.
- Organizational and clinician wellness are multi-faceted and require commitment from different levels of leadership, with an investment of time and support to mature. Be transparent, patient, and celebrate the positive impacts.
- Even if uptake is limited, ensure resources are integrated with organizational wellness in mind. Resources are an indicator of organizational commitment and are appreciated by staff.

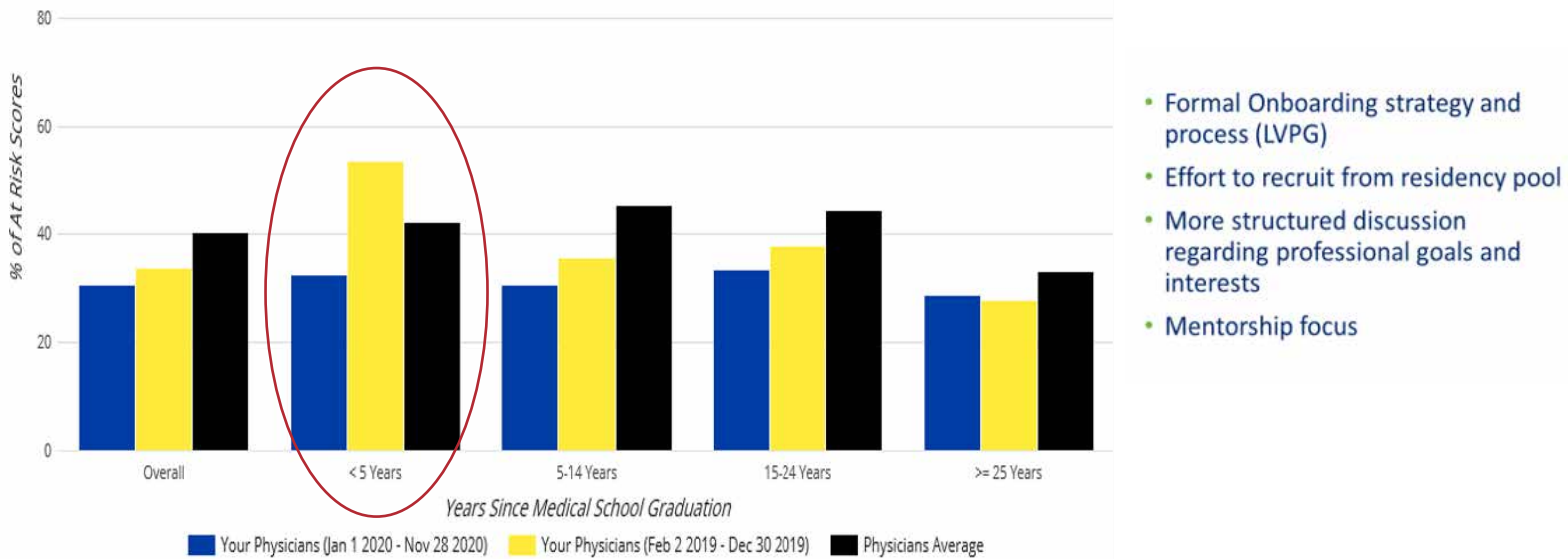
of concern that are specific to the department. Global issues (e.g., EHR, compensation) that might require policy modification are addressed organizationally.

LVHN has also integrated this work into graduate medical education, reinforcing wellness and seeking to prevent burnout in the pipeline of future medical staff, including residents and fellows. Research scholars have investigated and published several posters analyzing LVHN WBI results in various domains and applications, further infusing wellness into the organizational culture and enhancing opportunities for learning.

## RESULTS TO DATE

Using results from the WBI to make changes in workflow and professional fulfillment activities resulted in a decrease in burnout scores in the OB/GYN department by approximately 40 percent over two years. Similarly, a group of early career physicians was able to decrease their burnout score by 33 percent over two years through a combination of intensified onboarding and mentoring processes.

### “Early Career” Physician Initiative



With escalating interest in measures of burnout in 2020, the survey was used to closely monitor and respond to staff well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and to seek feedback on stressors such as PPE shortages, financial concerns, and the need for general support. Even during pandemic surges, a WBI measure of distress in LVHN clinicians was well below the national benchmark.

## TOOLS AND VENDOR PARTNERS

The WBI provides comprehensive reporting and analytic tools while protecting the anonymity of respondents by storing the data on secure cloud servers – administrators only receive de-identified and aggregated data by cohorts. The survey takes less than one minute to complete and includes benchmarks and customized resources to promote resilience and well-being. Options for some limited statistical support and the inclusion of customized wellness resources are also available.

## CHALLENGES WITH IMPLEMENTATION

While convincing LVHN leadership of the importance of clinician wellness was not a hard sell, naming the Chief Wellness Officer was just the first step. Ensuring dedicated time and resources to effectively operationalize the program took diligence, resulting in a program that is now supported by several operating divisions within LVHN with a budget of around \$ 700,000 per year.

### Contributors

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