Beyond Everest

Reflections on life in the mountains and neurosurgery

Douglas Brockmeyer MD
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT
“Because it’s there”
I still had a long, long way to go…
Why Everest?
Is it for me?
Is it for anybody?
Or everybody?

Alaska
Europe
Equador
Peru

Himalaya
**Base Camp (17,598 ft.)**  
Support staff remain here. Climbers train and acclimatize.

**Camp I (19,685 ft.)**
A huge, shifting pack of ice and crevasses, this stage is considered one of the most treacherous.

**Camp II (21,000 ft.)**
The Lhotse Face  
A steep, shiny ice wall.

**Camp III (23,625 ft.)**

**Camp IV (26,085 ft.)**  
First camp within the Death Zone. Most climbers at this elevation can no longer acclimatize.

**The Hillary Step**  
Climbed with fixed ropes, this stage is often a bottleneck as only one mountaineer can ascend at a time.

**The Death Zone**

**Summit (29,029 ft.)**
“Right Mind, Right Intent”

The Noble Eightfold Path

Right View
Right Resolve
Right Speech
Right Conduct

Right Livelihood
Right Effort
Right Mindfulness
Right Practice
Meaning
Is
Everywhere
Humility
Gratitude
Patience
Serenity
But for how long???
Selflessness vs. Selfishness
Why Ride?  Why Swim?
Why Hike?  Why Meditate?
Why Play?  Why Pray?
Why Climb?
Why Cook?  Why Dive?
Why Read?  Why Dance?
Why Run?  Why Knit?
“Because It’s There”
Because You’re Here
How do we take care of ourselves?
Balance vs. Burnout

....or worse
Addiction
Depression
Dishonesty
Mental Illness
Suicide
The Prevalence of Burnout Among US Neurosurgery Residents
Hakeem J Shakir, MD, Matthew J McPheeeters, MD, MBA, Hussain Shallwani, MD,
Joseph E Pittari, BS, Renée M Reynolds, MD

Neurosurgery, Volume 83, Issue 3, 1 September 2018, Pages 582-590,

Physician Burnout: Are We Treating the Symptoms Instead of the Disease?
Squier J1, Lobdell KW2, Fann JI3, DiMaio JM4.

The Modern Neurosurgical Leader as a Cure for Team Burnout
Youssef J. Hamadeh, MD, MSCI, Rami James N. Aoun, MD, MPH,
Richard S. Zimmerman, MD, Bernard R. Bendok, MD, MSCI

Neurosurgery, Volume 77, Issue 2, 1 August 2015, Pages N13,
https://doi.org/10.1227/01.neu.0000487292.26010.c3

Published: 01 August 2015

The Importance of Exercise in the Well-Rounded Physician: Dialogue for the Inclusion of a Physical Fitness Program in Neurosurgery Resident Training.
Fargen KM1, Spiotta AM2, Turner RD2, Patel S2.

Letter: How to Combat the Burnout Crisis in Neurosurgery? Cathedrals and Mentorship
Alejandro M Spiotta, MD, Stephen P Kalhorn, MD, Sunil J Patel, MD

Neurosurgery, ryy611, https://doi.org/10.1093/neuros/ryy611

Impact of a Residency-Integrated Wellness Program on Resident Mental Health, Sleepiness, and Quality of Life
Alejandro M Spiotta, MD, Kyle M Fargen, MD, MPH, Sunil Patel, MD,
Thomas Larrew, MD, Raymond D Turner, MD

Neurosurgery, Volume 84, Issue 2, 1 February 2019, Pages 341–346,

Rothenberger DA1.
Factors associated with career satisfaction and burnout among US neurosurgeons: results of a nationwide survey

Joseph H. McAbee, BS,1 Brian T. Ragel, MD,2 Shirley McCartney, PhD,2 G. Morgan Jones, PharmD, BCPS,3,4,5 L. Madison Michael II, MD,5,6 Michael DeCuypere, MD, PhD,3 Joseph S. Cheng, MD, MS,7 Frederick A. Boop, MD,3,6,8 and Paul Kilmo Jr., MD, MPH3,6,8

1School of Medicine, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; 2Department of Neurological Surgery, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Oregon; Departments of 3Neurosurgery, 4Neurology, and 5Clinical Pharmacy, University of Tennessee Health Science Center; 6Semmes-Murphy Neurologic & Spine Institute; 7Le Bonheur Neuroscience Institute, Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital, Memphis; and 8Department of Neurosurgery, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, Tennessee

OBJECT The object of this study was to identify and quantify predictors of burnout and career satisfaction among US neurosurgeons.

METHODS All US members (3247) of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) were invited to participate in a survey between September and December 2012. Responses were evaluated through univariate analysis. Factors independently associated with burnout and career satisfaction were determined using multivariable logistic regression. Subgroup analysis of academic and nonacademic neurosurgeons was performed as well.

RESULTS The survey response rate was 24% (783 members). The majority of respondents were male, 40–60 years old, in a stable relationship, with children, working in a group or university practice, and trained in a subspecialty. More than 80% of respondents reported being at least somewhat satisfied with their career, and 70% would choose a career in neurosurgery again; however, only 20% of neurosurgeons believed that professional issues would improve in the future, and 52% believed it would worsen. The overall burnout rate was 56.7%. Factors independently associated with both burnout and career satisfaction included achieving a balance between work and life outside the hospital (burnout OR 0.45, satisfaction OR 10.0) and anxiety about future financial or health care reform (burnout OR 1.9, satisfaction OR 0.32). While the burnout rate for nonacademic neurosurgeons (23.8%) was higher than that for academic neurosurgeons (47.7%), academicians who had practiced for over 20 years were less likely to be satisfied with their careers.

CONCLUSIONS The rates of burnout and career satisfaction were both high in this survey study of US neurosurgeons. The negative effects of burnout on the lives of surgeons, patients, and their families require further study and probably necessitate the development of interventional programs at local, regional, and even national levels.


KEY WORDS neurosurgery; burnout; career; satisfaction; survey; health care reform
Suggested Methods To Combat Burnout:

- Mentorship
- Leadership
- Sense of Purpose
- Physical Activity
- “Wellness”
- Others…
Balance

Intention/Mindfulness

Gratitude

That’s what beyond Everest
“The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and his religion. He hardly knows which is which; he simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him his is always doing both”

James Michener
The day I joined the 30,440 ft. club
Thank you for your attention