

Prioritizing the Work-Life Balance

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I'm hopeful that the big first step I've made to improve my own work-life balance is being made in the right direction – that I'm not trading one set of overwhelming professional demands for a new, different flavor of the same degree of overwhelming professional demands. It appears, at least one week into it, to be a change for the better.

On Friday, I attended something my new organization calls “Report Out.” This weekly event allows different teams throughout the many clinics and hospital departments to report on different quality initiatives. Two of the events being reported on involved physician workflow — basically the entire process from the time a patient checks in until the physician closes the encounter in the electronic health record.

The usual measures were employed — time to room the patient, amount of time (in hours and days) until the office visit was “closed,” patient satisfaction, etc. However, what garnered applause from the audience was when the first physician reported how she now had time to spend with her family in the evenings (as opposed to returning to the clinic to finish charting) and when the second physician described enjoying an actual lunch hour during which he could leisurely enjoy the taste of his food. Despite all the other improvements, these two markers of achieving a reasonable work-life balance were the most celebrated.

Making a career change was motivated in large part by a desire to improve my ability to manage personal and professional demands. It is so heartening, in this very first week of my new job, to see that it is a realized concept within the organization, not just something the leadership gives lip service to, or includes in recruiting materials to lure unsuspecting physicians into the same old standard of endless demands, charting, patient visits, and an eroding quality of life.

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Tomorrow, I start seeing patients. That is my only professional obligation now – just to see and take care of patients. My administrative, scholarly and teaching responsibilities are gone, allowing me to focus on “just” being a doctor. My hope is that this will allow me to be more focused and maximize my efficiency at work, thereby freeing me up to really be at home with my family.

Disclosures:

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