Age and sex differences in burnout, career satisfaction, and well-being in US neurologists

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Study objective
To examine age and sex differences in burnout, career satisfaction, and well-being among US neurologists.

Summary results
Burnout, career satisfaction, and wellbeing levels among US neurologists differ based on age and sex.

What is known and what this paper adds
Burnout is a serious problem for medical professionals; previous studies have documented age and sex differences in burnout rates among physicians generally. This study documents such differences specifically for neurologists.

Participants and setting
This study surveyed 4,127 practicing neurologists belonging to the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) with primary addresses in the US.

Design, size, and duration
Neurologists were sent a 57-question survey for assessing burnout and career satisfaction. The 22-item Maslach Burnout Inventory–Human Services Survey was used to measure overall burnout and the burnout domains emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Age and sex differences in survey responses were assessed through binary logistic regression.

Primary outcome measures
Age and sex differences in burnout and career satisfaction among survey respondents.

Main results and the role of chance
Responses were obtained from 1,671 neurologists (34.7% female; response rate, 40.5%). Female respondents were, on average, younger than male respondents with a mean (SD) of 46.9 (10.1) years vs 54.3 (12.1) years (p < 0.001). Depersonalization improved with increasing age. Emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and overall quality of life initially worsened then started to improve with increasing age. Burnout rates were higher for women than for men (64.6% vs 57.8%; p = 0.007), but sex did not independently predict burnout in age-adjusted models (p = 0.284). On qualitative analysis, women experienced burnout differently than men.

Bias, confounding, and other reasons for caution
Data were self-reported. This study did not account for physicians leaving neurology. The survey did not address sex-specific topics that may affect burnout.

Generalizability to other populations
The 59.5% nonresponse rate may limit the generalizability of the results.

Study funding/potential competing interests
This study was funded by the AAN. Some authors report receiving employment and honoraria from the AAN, holding leadership positions in the AAN, serving on journal editorial boards, receiving lecture honoraria from healthcare companies and Tufts Medical Center, receiving honoraria from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, receiving publication royalties, and receiving funding from medical research foundations. Go to Neurology.org/N for full disclosures.

A draft of the short-form article was written by M. Dalefield, a writer with Editage, a division of Cactus Communications. The authors of the full-length article and the journal editors edited and approved the final version.
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