



“Health Practitioner Wellness and Wellbeing: How Big Is the Problem?”

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The vulture in the frame



Kelvin Carter 1993 (<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com>)

1. Who are today's Vultures?
2. Are health practitioners any less vulnerable than this child?
3. Are we merely photographing the struggle?

Health Practitioner wellness



Wellness is pursuit of **physical**, **mental** and **emotional well-being**



Healthcare practitioners are the backbone of health systems (Alan et al, 2023)



CDC Vital Signs 2023 report Nearly half of health workers reported often feeling burned out in 2022, up from 32% in 2018



Up to 63% of physicians report symptoms of burnout. (Guille and Sen, 2024)
and 1 in 3 nurses consider leaving the profession due to stress. (Li et al, 2024)

Why Practitioner wellness and Wellbeing Matters

High rates of depression, anxiety, and substance use among clinicians and other healthcare professionals (Jaber et al, 2022)

Suicide rates among physicians are higher than the general population.

Stigma and lack of support often prevent help-seeking (<https://www.who.int>), (Engle, 2025)

- Practitioner wellbeing is a patient safety issue (Bamforth et al, 2023)

1. Increased medical errors.
2. Lower patient satisfaction.
3. Reduced quality of care.
4. Reduced health system resilience
5. Poor workforce retention and morale

“An unwell practitioner is a silent emergency in the health system.”

Root Causes

1. Systemic Factors: Workload & Staffing Shortages
2. Administrative Burden: bureaucratic tasks, and regulatory compliance.
3. Lack of Resources: Insufficient equipment, technology, or access to support services.
4. Compensation and Recognition: Feelings of being undervalued or underpaid.
5. Toxic Work Culture: Bullying, harassment, lack of psychological safety.
6. Moral Injury: The distress from being unable to provide high-quality care due to systemic constraints.
7. Perfectionism/High Expectations
8. Stigma Associated with Seeking Help: Fear of professional repercussions or judgment.

Practitioner Wellness & wellbeing - Zambia

- Mental Health Act (2019):
 - Aligns with UN disability rights and mental health protection (General Assembly Resolution 46/119 of 17th December 1991 & other Human Rights Instruments.)
 - Recognizes mental health of practitioners.
 - Mandates employer duty of care.
- HPCZ National Health Care Standards (2020):
 - Added Health Practitioners' Rights.
 - Protection from workplace abuses.
- Health Professions Act No. 17 (2024):
 - Introduced peer review mechanisms for disciplinary matters.
- Framework for Impaired Practice (2025):
 - Work in progress

Call to action

- Addressing practitioner well-being is not just a moral imperative, it requires **systemic changes, supportive leadership, and individual resilience strategies.**

- Invest in **evidence-based** interventions.
- Foster a **culture** of compassion, support, and sustainability

“Wellbeing isn't a luxury for health workers. It's a public health priority. So I ask: Who is caring for the carers? And what will you do differently after today?”

1. Lets build feeding centres closer by ***Creating Support Systems NOW!***

2. ***Don't let practitioners collapse unseen.***

3. ***Don't be the vulture or passive photographer***

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