Preventing Healthcare Staff Burnout: A Solutions-Focused Approach

Snuffing Staff Burnout

While no industry has remained unscathed by the COVID-19 crisis, the healthcare sector has arguably been hit the hardest of all, with both clinical and nonclinical staff on the frontlines from the onset, combating the pandemic.
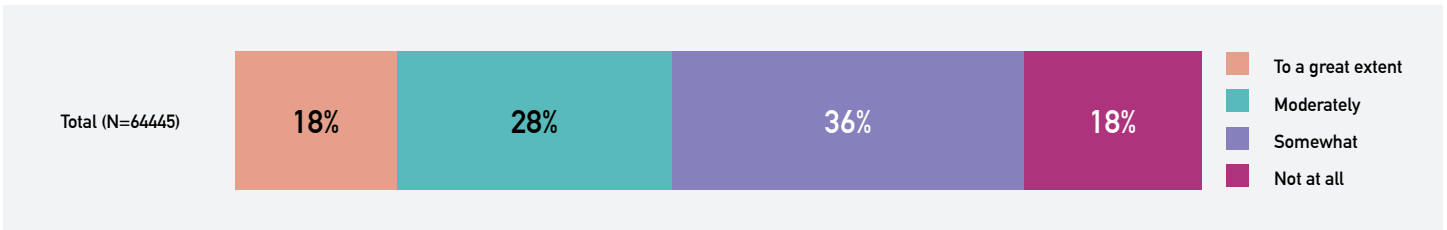
Collecting more than 58,000 respondents across 85 health care organizations and practices in 29 states, The American Medical Association's National Comparison Report noted "heightened exhaustion, cynicism, feelings of inefficacy, and disengagement" among healthcare workers. Even more concerning, in a sector where the workforce is already stretched alarmingly thin, 27% of respondents noted a "moderate, likely, or definite chance they will leave practice altogether in the next two years."

A 2021 report by Sodexo, Healthcare Burnout: Supporting Staff and Anticipating the Next Crisis for 2022 and Beyond, examined the current state of healthcare workers, analyzed the global health crisis, and unpacked strategies for anticipating the next crisis. The focus of this report is on actionable strategies organizations can take to help alleviate the impact of burnout on their staff and ensure they feel valued at work (see Figure 1 below).

While there is no single definition for "burnout," for the purposes of this report and its sources, burnout is considered self-reported and identified by survey respondents (see Figure 2 below).
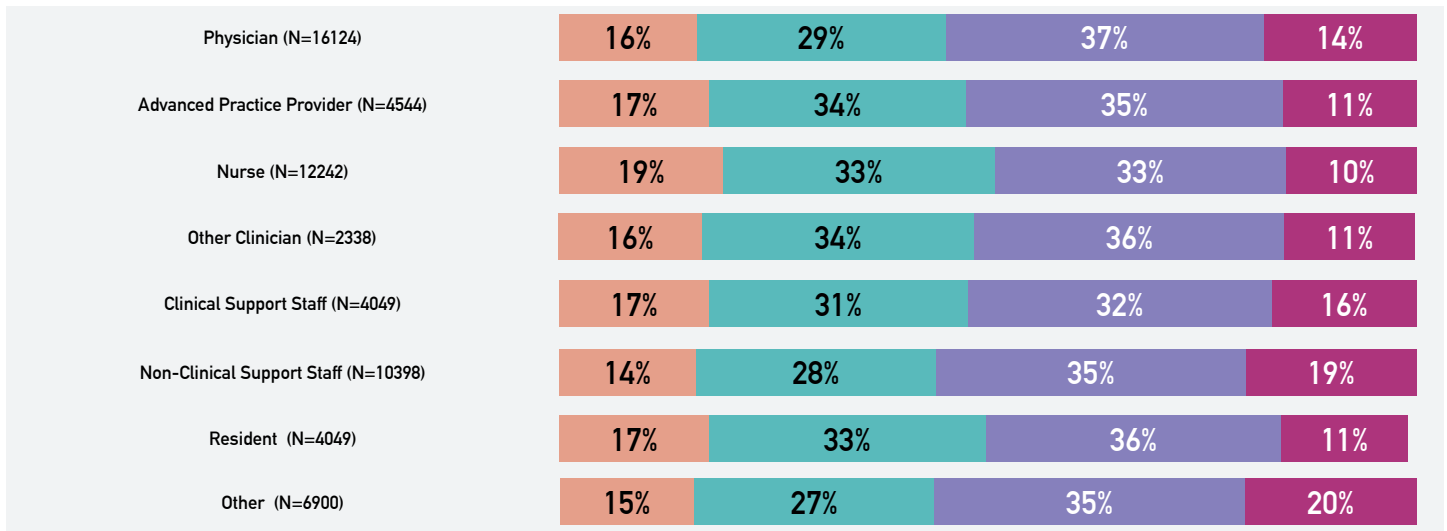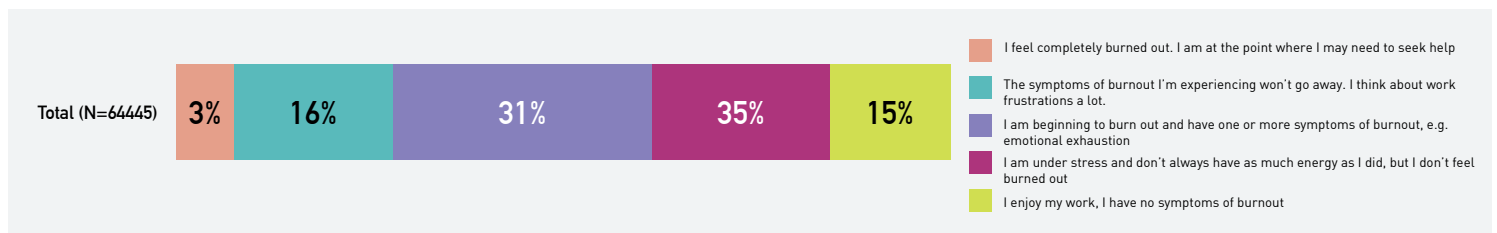
I feel valued by my organization

	To a great extent	Moderately	Somewhat	Not at all
Total (N=64445)	18%	28%	36%	18%

Role Type

	To a great extent	Moderately	Somewhat	Not at all
Physician (N=16124)	16%	29%	37%	14%
Advanced Practice Provider (N=4544)	17%	34%	35%	11%
Nurse (N=12242)	19%	33%	33%	10%
Other Clinician (N=2338)	16%	34%	36%	11%
Clinical Support Staff (N=4049)	17%	31%	32%	16%
Non-Clinical Support Staff (N=10398)	14%	28%	35%	19%
Resident (N=4049)	17%	33%	36%	11%
Other (N=6900)	15%	27%	35%	20%

Figure 1
Source: American Medical Association

AMA

Using your own definition of "burnout", please choose one of the numbers below:

Total (N=64445)	3%	16%	31%	35%	15%

Legend:
- I feel completely burned out. I am at the point where I may need to seek help
- The symptoms of burnout I'm experiencing won't go away. I think about work frustrations a lot.
- I am beginning to burn out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, e.g. emotional exhaustion
- I am under stress and don't always have as much energy as I did, but I don't feel burned out
- I enjoy my work, I have no symptoms of burnout

Role Type

Role				
Physician (N=16124)	21%	30%	38%	15%
Advanced Practice Provider (N=4544)	16%	30%	35%	16%
Nurse (N=12242)	14%	26%	38%	22%
Other Clinician (N=2338)	16%	29%	38%	17%
Clinical Support Staff (N=4049)	12%	25%	38%	25%
Non-Clinical Support Staff (N=10398)	22%	29%	34%	15%
Resident (N=4049)	16%	28%	37%	19%
Other (N=6900)	18%	28%	36%	18%

Figure 2
Source: American Medical Association

AMA

"Burnout is typically caused by organizational issues but manifests itself so differently we tend to think of it as a personal problem."
–Laura Hamill, PhD, Senior Advisor, Limeade

The Critical Importance of Managerial Support

The evidence is overwhelming: Managers play a key role in helping to prevent staff burnout. As a day-to-day influencer over workplace culture, the way a manager leads by example could spell the difference between engaged and productive employees or burned-out individuals just going through the motions until a better opportunity comes along. As the old saying goes: "People leave managers, not companies."

> "Burnout is a harmful individual and organizational virus that targets the most committed employees."
> –Burnout POV: The Causes and Impact of Burnout in Your Organization, Limeade

Managers have been identified in numerous studies as one of the strongest drivers of employee well-being and engagement (Gallup, 2015b; Limeade & Quantum Workplace, 2016). Most employees say their immediate managers matter more to their work experience than C-suite leadership when it comes to well-being support (Limeade & Quantum Workplace, 2016).

1. Enable managers to support employees.

Organizations need to focus on fostering a culture of well-being and providing managers with the tools to support their employees holistically without the fear of being reprimanded (Maslach, 2017). Organizations should:

• **Encourage and give time to managers to have frequent 1:1 meetings with their employees during which time managers can have empathetic conversations with their employees to discuss potential roadblocks and barriers (see Figure 3 below).**

• **Help managers recognize their employees for their contributions by providing relevant tools and processes for such recognition. Recognition helps employees feel valued for the time and energy they give to their organization and motivated to keep doing so (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003).**

• **Train managers on how to support employees with issues faced outside of work, since what happens outside of work impacts how employees perform at work. For example, managers need to be made aware of all resources available to employees and know where to direct employees in need. Managers also need to know how to have conversations that tap into non-work topics.**

2. Provide a clear feedback process.

Feedback is essential to help employees manage their energy and resources and to feel like they have a say in decisions that impact their work (Schaufeli, Bakker, & van Rhenen, 2009). Organizational examples of providing a beneficial feedback process include:

• **Creating a clear and structured process for employees to both receive and provide feedback.**

• **Offering employees an anonymous platform to share their feedback, which allows employees to voice when demands or expectations are too much, or when resources and recovery moments are not adequately supplied.**

• **Regularly letting employees know how their feedback is being used to improve existing processes.**

3. Foster an inclusive workplace.

When employees can be themselves at work, they have more energy and mental resources to devote to their jobs (Hewlin, 2009). To promote a true sense of inclusion at work, organizations could:

•**Encourage employees to express themselves and their passions through something as simple as decorating their desks or updating their company profile.**

• **Focus on helping employees form habits to make others feel included, such as recognizing the contributions of others and seeing feedback outside of their familiar work group.**

• **Help employees feel welcomed, known, and valued for who they are to foster an environment where they are comfortable and safe to be themselves at work.**

Supporting Employee Well-Being

Employee well being

Culture →

Leaders →

Strategic alignment →

Tools and programs →

← Manager

← Teams and peers

← Networks

← Environment

Why it matters?

1. Manager support

2. Well-being tools and resources make well-being come to life

3. Leadership support

99%
of employees who feel they have higher well-being and organizational support recommend their company as a great place to work.

91%
of employees with high well-being and organizational support say they are going to stay.

72%
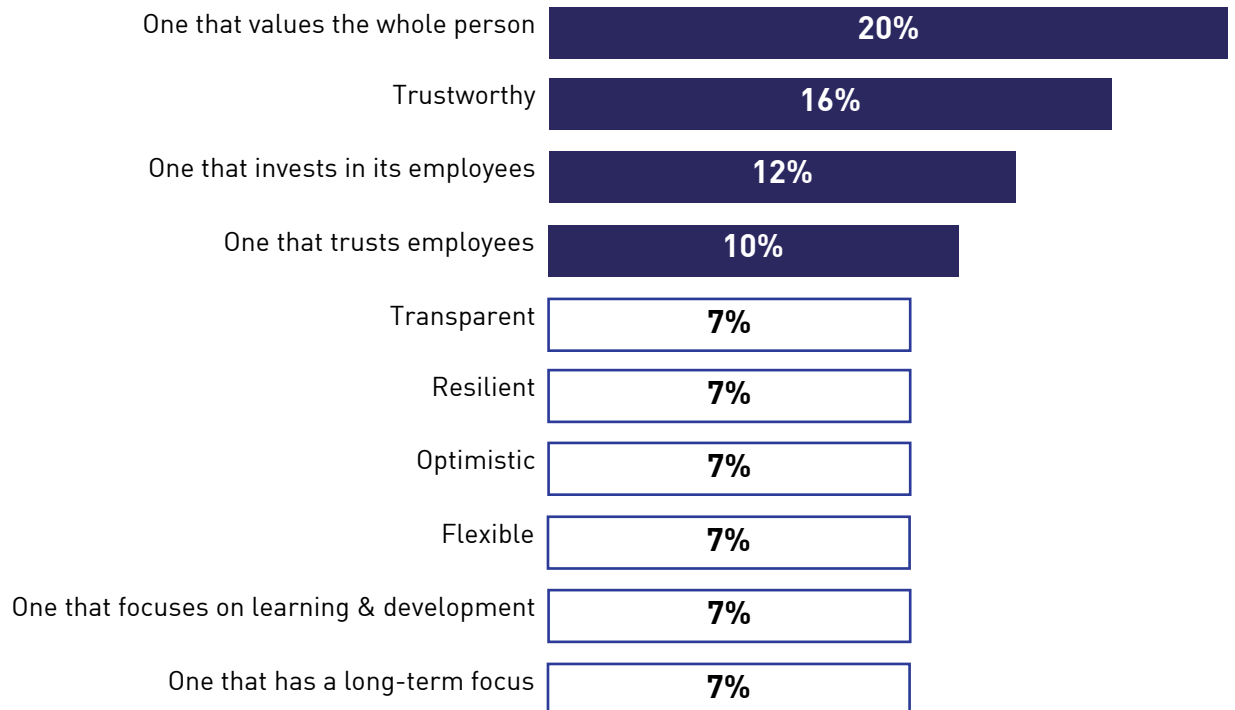of employees with high well-being say they also have high organizational support.

38%
more engagement when employees feel their employer cares about their well-being.

Contributions from Limeade Institute: Reetu Sandhu, MA; Amy Casebolt; Dana Auten, MS; Julianne Tillmann, PhD; Laura Hamill, PhD; Henry Albrecht, MBA

The Most Important Cultural Attributes for Well-Being Support

Attribute	Percentage
One that values the whole person	20%
Trustworthy	16%
One that invests in its employees	12%
One that trusts employees	10%
Transparent	7%
Resilient	7%
Optimistic	7%
Flexible	7%
One that focuses on learning & development	7%
One that has a long-term focus	7%

Caring for Those Who Care for Others

Staff engagement affects patient safety, care quality, and patient experience. Reduced staff levels increase the chances of not only a negative patient interaction, but also untenable workloads and expectations heaped upon staff members. Adding prolonged high pressure from the pandemic, increasingly complex cases and long shifts, and personal challenges balancing and managing home and work life has led to many staff feeling on the brink of burnout.

Experiencia is Sodexo's proprietary insights platform that creates human-centered experiences along an employee's journey as a care provider.

Experiencia® enables a better staff experience.

Insight-led evidence for improving staff engagement

We leverage our proprietary insights platform to unlock a deeper understanding of your employee population and their needs.

Benefits

| Elevating employee engagement with insight and understanding | Powering leaders with real-time data and insights to optimize employee experience | Understanding the employee experience throughout their day | Leveraging insights to adapt experiences specific to your employee population |

A Deeper Understanding of Your Employee Population and Their Needs

Providers understand the critical role their employees have in delivering the best possible quality care. Giving employees an active voice and providing a means for them to share concerns, needs and ideas can enable leaders to minimize pain points and improve engagement.

Sodexo Healthcare understands that each employee is more than a staff member, but rather a human being with unique needs and preferences, values and beliefs.
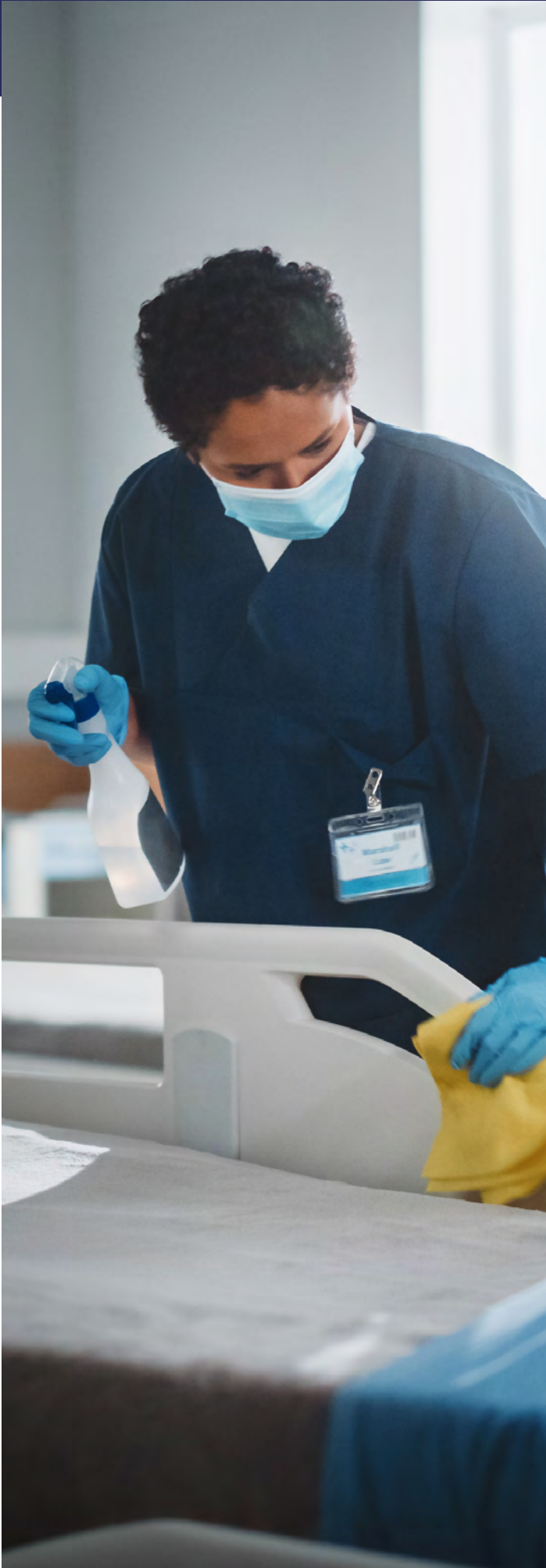
A result of extensive research and innovation over nearly 10 years, Experiencia aggregates historical, real time and research-based data from qualitative and quantitative sources, providing a holistic understanding of your employee population so you can proactively address their unique needs/concerns. Consumer insights, personal preferences and satisfaction data support decisions that impact employee engagement and loyalty.

For example:

• **Do they have brand preferences that they'd like to have available at retail?**

• **Do they need dedicated areas for moments of respite?**

• **Are there gaps in their needs, i.e. problem with a learning and development pathway, desire to be recognized, etc.?**

Experiencia allows for the true customization of an employee experience across the care journey that can impact engagement, loyalty, absenteeism, attrition and overall employee wellbeing.

Circles Concierge through Experiencia for Understaffed, Overworked Systems

Circles Concierge team members are partners in a facility's employee and patient ecosystem. Assisting with day-to-day tasks and activities, the Experiencia concierge program alleviates a myriad of daily stresses, providing clinical staff time to focus on what is essential – the care of the patient.

Circles Concierge is the global leader in designing and delivering customer concierge and quality of life experience services for over 1 million customers annually.

- Owned by Sodexo, the 19th largest employer in the world
- 25 years of experience
- Headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts
- 250+ client sites, five call centers
- 22 million+ requests handled with 74/7/365 servicing
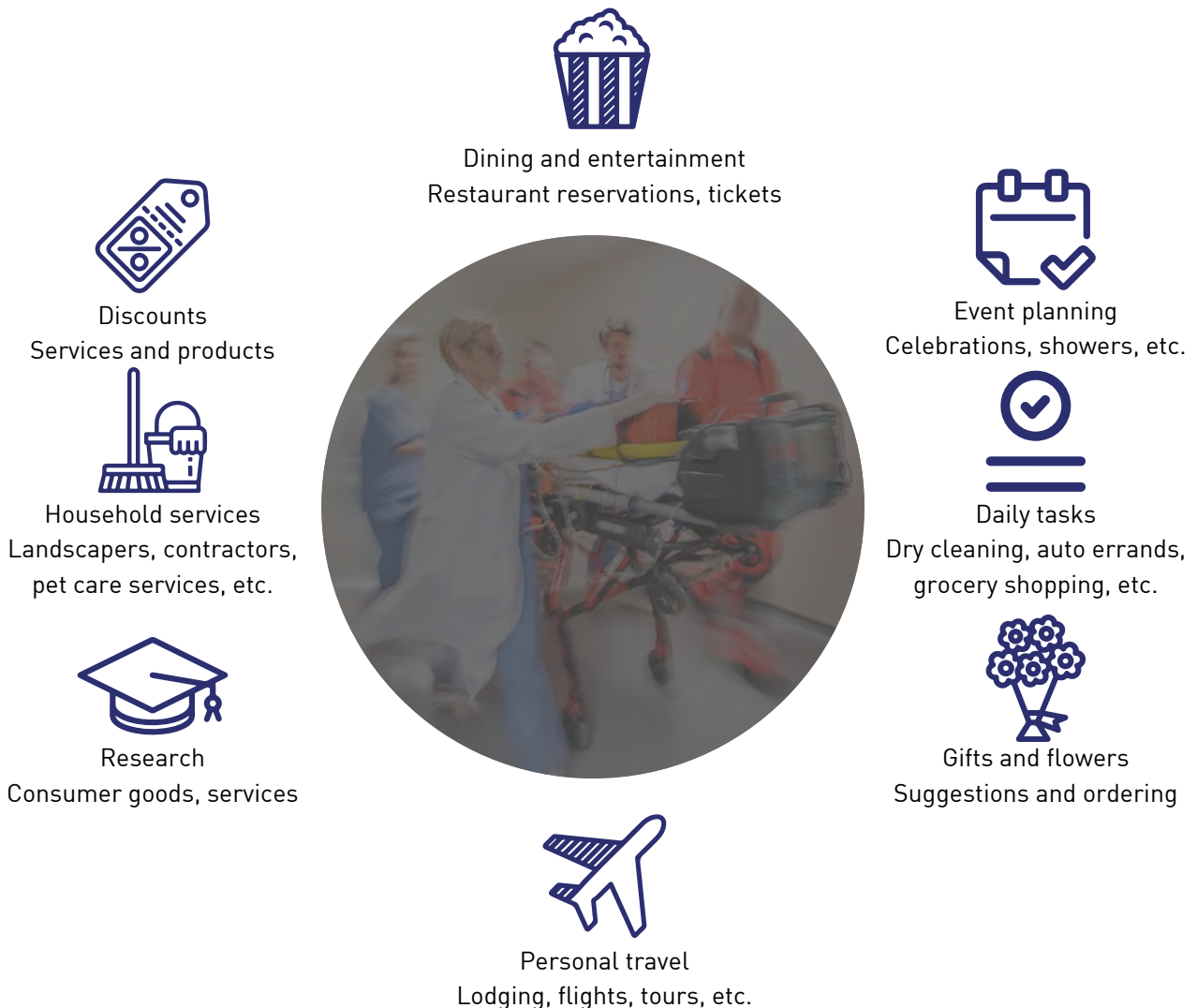
Support, Understand and Engage with Your Employees

Personnel shortages ranked No. 1 on the list of hospital CEOs' top concerns in 2021, surpassing financial challenges for first time since 2004, according to the American College of Healthcare Executives' annual survey of top issues confronting hospitals. Circles concierge and personal assistant services provide peace of mind to healthcare employees and staff.

Benefits
By providing staff access to Circles services, organizations can improve the quality of life for their employees and, in turn, will realize direct business impacts.

• **Time savings and productivity for employees**

• **Improved work and life balance**

• **Increased workplace efficiency**

• **Enhanced employer loyalty**

Dining and entertainment
Restaurant reservations, tickets

Discounts
Services and products

Household services
Landscapers, contractors,
pet care services, etc.

Research
Consumer goods, services

Event planning
Celebrations, showers, etc.

Daily tasks
Dry cleaning, auto errands,
grocery shopping, etc.

Gifts and flowers
Suggestions and ordering
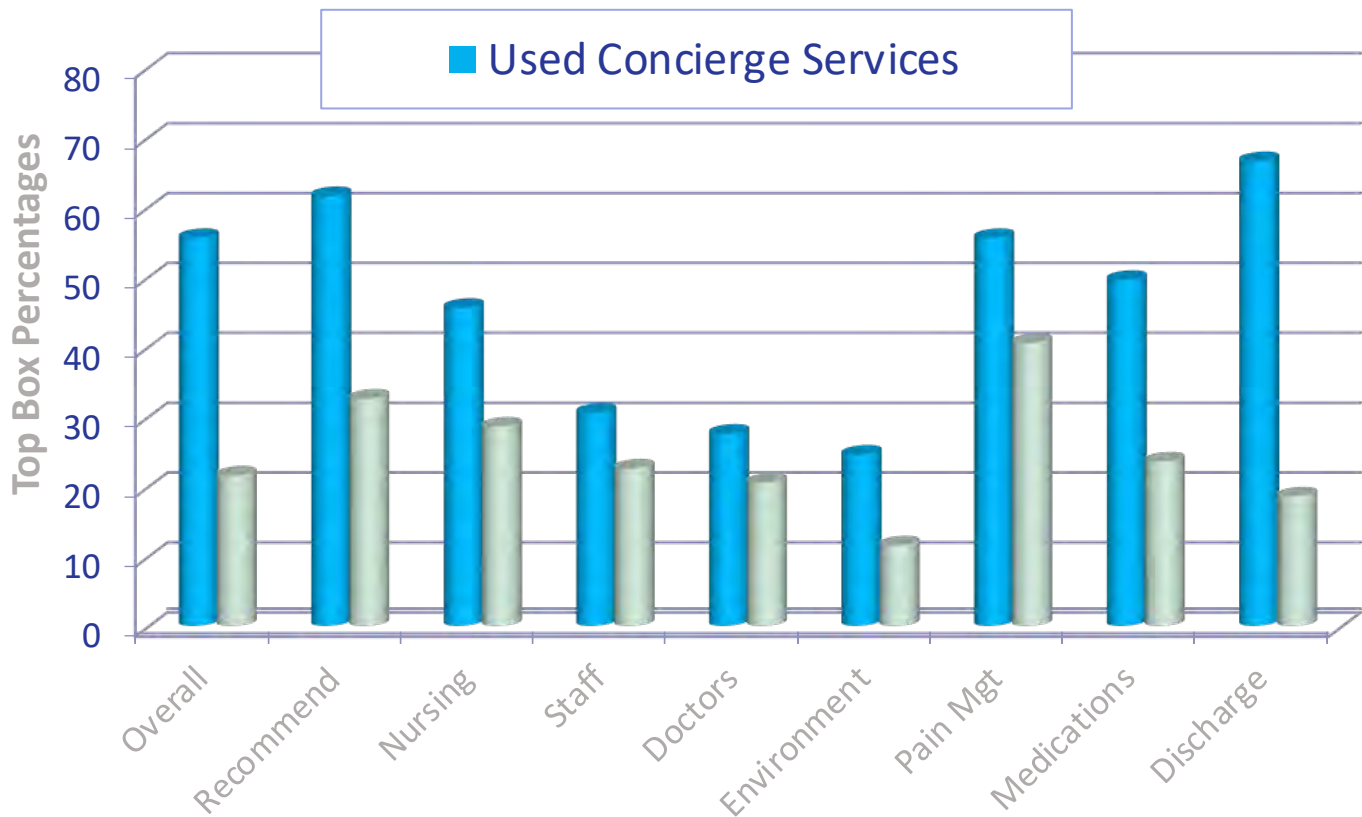
Personal travel
Lodging, flights, tours, etc.

Improving Outcomes

Challenge: free clinical staff of daily stresses that can be alleviated from their scope of services to allow them to focus on clinical care

Solution: onsite concierge program 7 days a week

Results: 6-year trend of satisfaction scores higher in every category for those that interact with Circles Concierge

Chart: **Used Concierge Services** — Top Box Percentages by category: Overall, Recommend, Nursing, Staff, Doctors, Environment, Pain Mgt, Medications, Discharge

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists — Facilitating Interactions Between Doctors, Patients and Staff

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) are highly trained with extensive educational degrees, ensuring specific and thorough knowledge. Sodexo wellness and nutrition team members are partners in a patient's health and focus on specialized, individualized care, allowing nurses in short-staffed hospitals to concentrate on their specific scope of services.

Because the primary role of a RDN is to design nutrition programs to improve or maintain the health of patients, the RDN is often at the center of the interactions between doctor, patient and the staff of the facility in which care is administered. Sodexo Healthcare's patient nutrition program is the only evidence-based approach to patient nutrition powered by the latest emerging science and data from around the globe, administered by Registered Dietitian Nutritionists operating at the top of their credentials, and guided by a national nutrition leadership team.

TeleHealth Nutrition Platform Capabilities

The innovative TeleHealth Nutrition Platform — provided through the Nutrition and Wellness center by Sodexo — allows RDNs to see patients virtually, providing systems the credentialed staffing assistance they need when they need it, even during critical staffing shortages. It also offers patients a convenient way to log on from anywhere with the mobile app, message a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, track metrics and much more. The TeleHealth Nutrition Platform reaches patients safely and helps prevent the delay of patient care while accelerating the community's confidence and engagement in healthcare systems offering this technology solution.
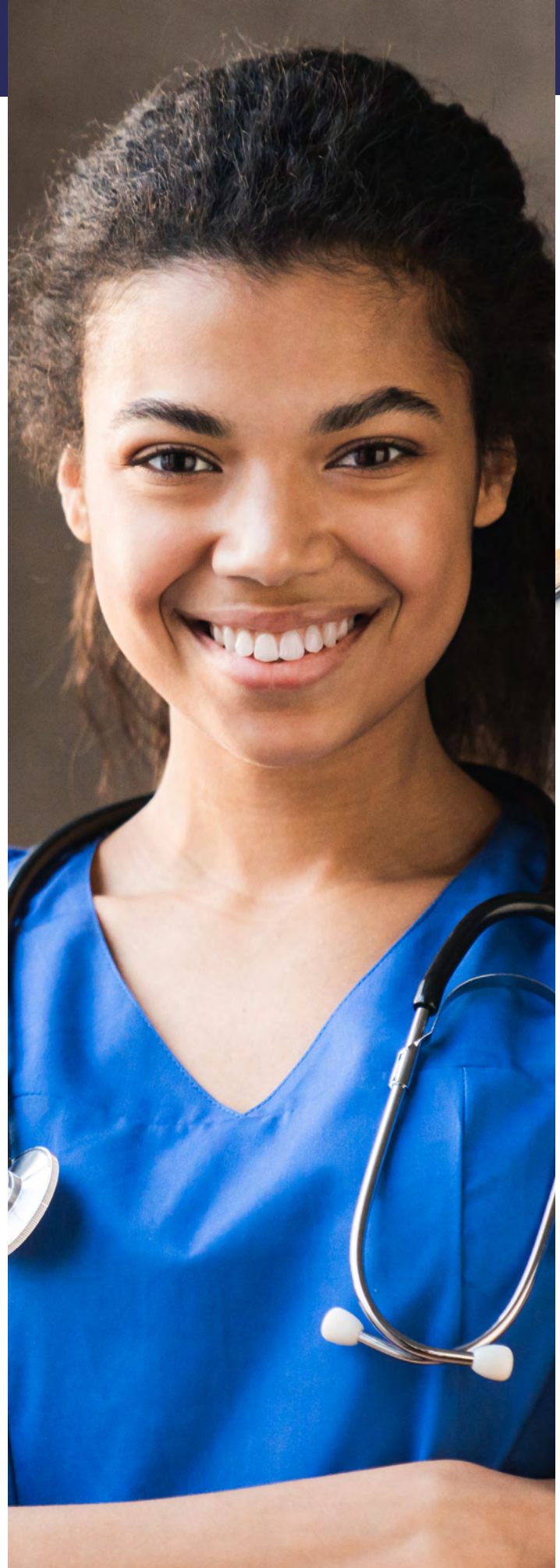
Nationwide Services via Telenutrition Sessions

HIPAA-compliant platform for virtual sessions.

Mobile App

Patients can log on from anywhere with the mobile app.

Calendar Management

Convenient scheduling for clients and Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, including automatic confirmations and reminders.

Stay Engaged

Patients can upload food photos, message the Registered Dietitian, track metrics and more between visits.

Key Takeaway:

The central relationship between managers and employees plays a critical role in staff burnout prevention. The importance of this relationship presents both challenges and opportunities. When organizations and managers work to create access to appropriate support services, teach evidence-based skills to cope with stress and anxiety, and maintain transparent and frequent communication — together they can alleviate burnout among healthcare staff.

Sources and Further Reading

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