

# ACT to Reduce Psychiatry Resident Burnout

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## INTRODUCTION

- Burnout is stress characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, detachment, and loss of self-efficacy.<sup>1-2</sup>
- Burnout is linked to reduced patient safety and poor physician mental health.<sup>3</sup>
- The DPRTP has recently made efforts to reduce resident burnout by changing job factors (e.g., ensuring appropriate duty hour limits) yet in DPRTP surveys, over 30% of residents still report sleep deprivation that they fear impacts patient safety and their ability to learn.
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a cognitive-behavioral intervention that improves human functioning and adaptability by increasing psychological flexibility.<sup>4</sup> Skills include acceptance, mindfulness and values clarification and allow individuals to be more present, aware, and open to internal experience, so that their behavior can align with their personal and professional values.
- ACT skills have been used with a variety of populations, including clinicians. Studies show that even brief ACT interventions reduce burnout and improve personal and professional valued living among providers in medicine-related fields.<sup>5-8</sup>

### Objective

The aim of this study is to gather preliminary data on acceptability and effectiveness of an ACT workshop for reducing resident burnout offered as part of the DPRTP.

## METHODS

- Duke Psychiatry residents completed baseline measurements of burnout (Maslach Burnout Inventory)<sup>9</sup>, sleep disturbance and impairment (PROMIS sleep scales)<sup>10</sup>, general health (General Health Questionnaire)<sup>11</sup> and life satisfaction (Life Satisfaction Scale)<sup>12</sup> and then participated in an ACT workshop focused on reducing burnout (conducted over 2 consecutive weeks) during their scheduled academic half day.
- Residents also received weekly text message reminders related to the content of the workshop for 12 weeks. A 12-week follow-up assessment of burnout and psychological health is scheduled for November 1, 2017.

## RESULTS

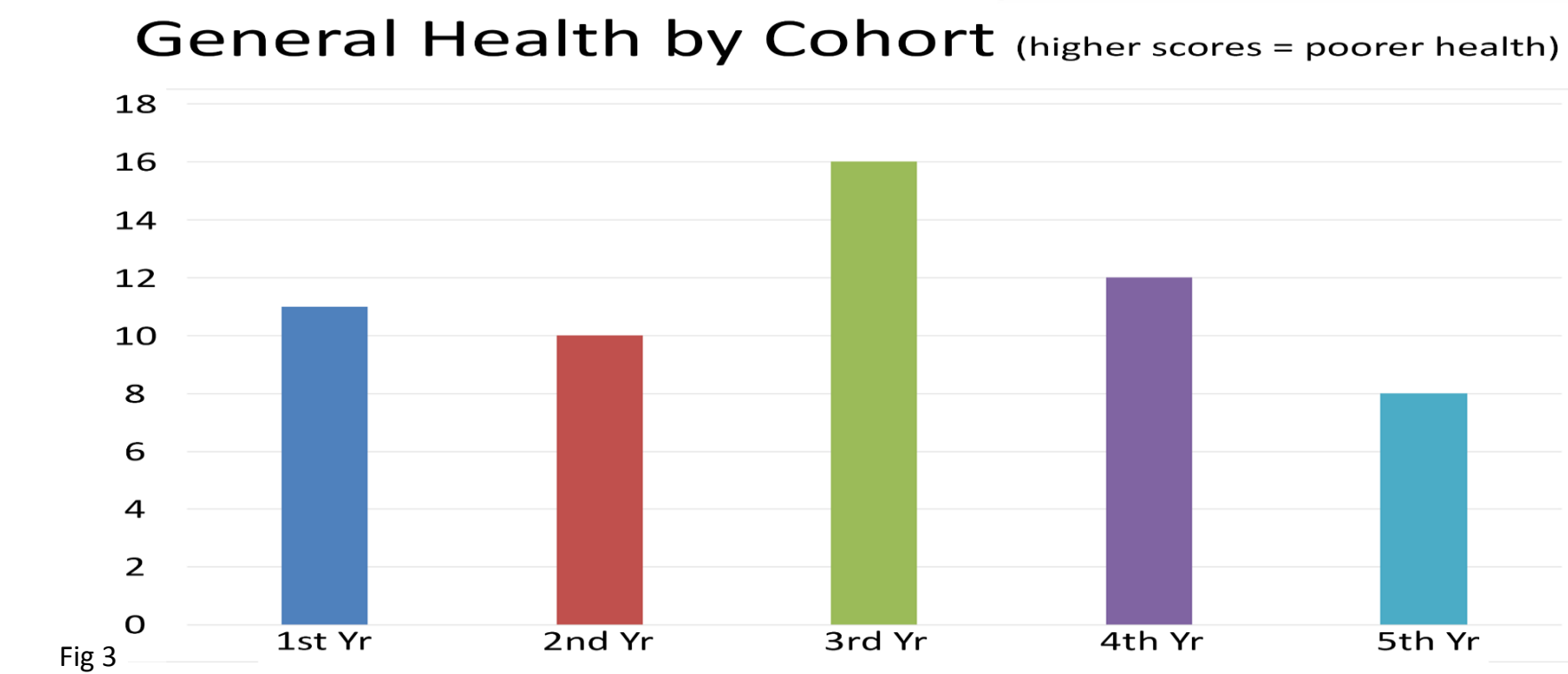
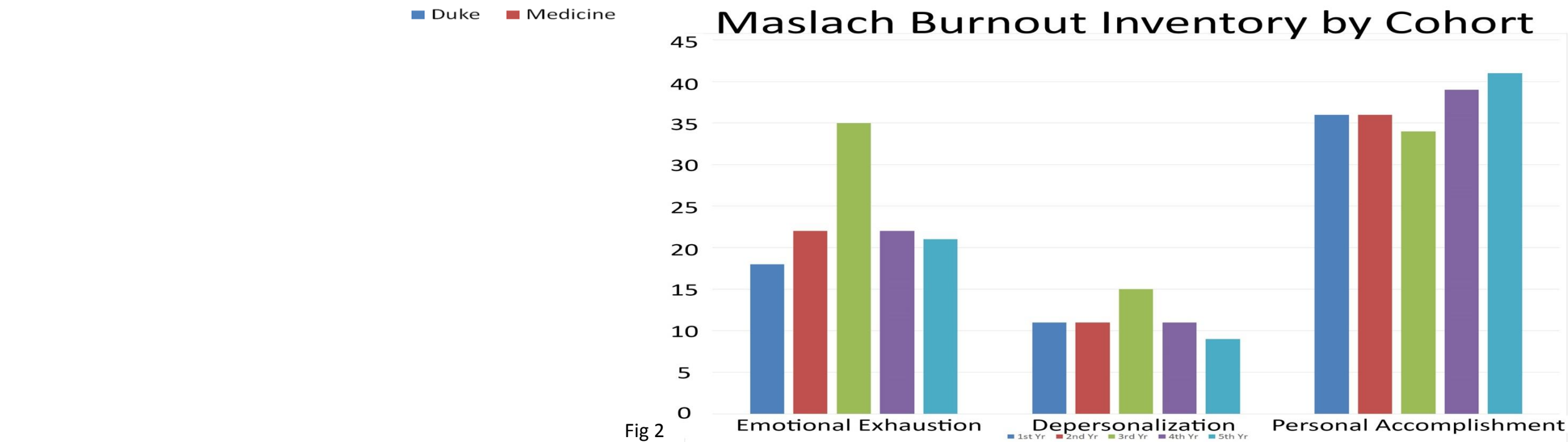
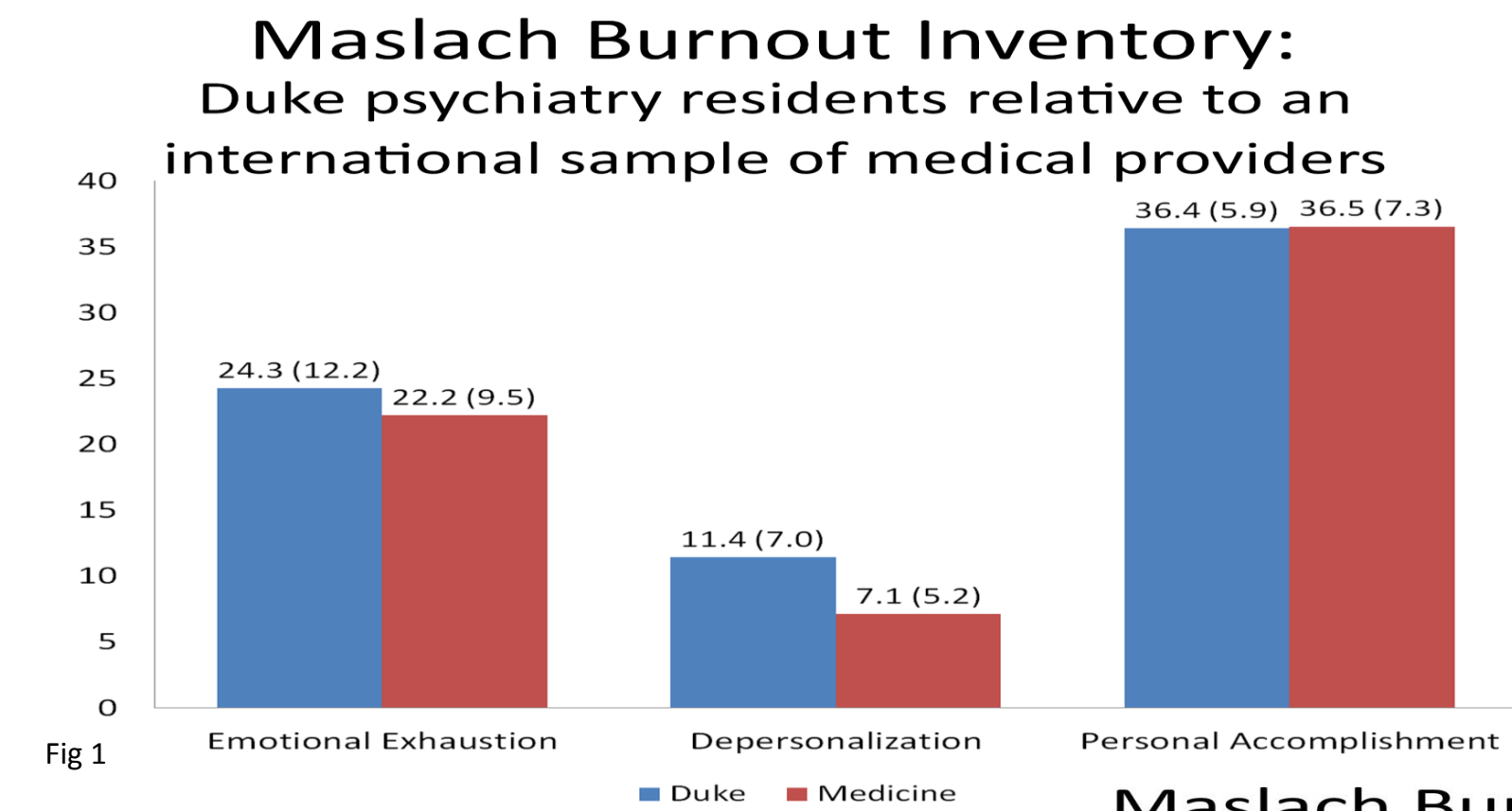
- 37 residents completed the assessment
  - 51% female
  - 62% Caucasian, 30% Asian, 5% Black/African American, 3% Other
  - Mean Age: 31 years (*SD*=3.96)
- Descriptive analyses indicate that Duke Psychiatry Residents, on average, report moderate levels of burnout (See Fig. 1), endorse typical levels of sleep disturbance and impairment relative to adults in the United States general population, and rate their level of life satisfaction in the “slightly satisfied” range (results not shown).
- Descriptive analyses also suggest residents entering their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of residency report levels of burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion, relative to peers in other cohorts (See Fig 2-3).
- Results indicate overall workshop acceptability was high (See Table 1) and participants extracted valuable, model consistent content (See Table 2).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This session was relevant to me or my work.					90% “agree” or “strongly agree”
This session was helpful.					81% “agree” or “strongly agree”
I liked this session.					83% “agree” or “strongly agree”
My participation in this session will influence what I do with patients, with myself, with others.					67% “agree” or “strongly agree”
My participation in this session will influence the care that I provide.					72% “agree” or “strongly agree”
I would recommend this session as part of the Resident Training Program.					83% “agree” or “strongly agree”
I would recommend that others attend this session if it was optional.					78% “agree” or “strongly agree”
I would take part in additional booster sessions or other offerings on ACT.					70% “agree” or “strongly agree”

Table 1

Please tell us something that you will take away from this session:	
“That regardless of experience level, we all bring something of value to learn from”	“Watching for when I'm trying to avoid”
“The feeling that others feel the same”	“Allow”
“The idea of exploring negative emotions as the flipside of values/meaning”	“Being true to my values and using this as a support system”
“There is a lot of pain among the residents/us”	“Combining residents from different PG4-years brought up interesting perspectives on our mindspace”
“Trying to think of value in pt interactions”	“Explanation of values and remembering to use those as guide to help guide my (care).”
“Paying attention to our thoughts and their impacts”	“Feeling more connected to other residents.”
“Perspective”	“Hopefully will remember at times to defuse in difficult moments”
“Reminded about hardness and worthwhileness of feeling stuff”	“I get burned out but it's okay.”
“Returning to my value at difficult times with patients”	
“Value of different perspectives”	

Table 2



## CONCLUSIONS

- Findings suggest that Duke Psychiatry Residents are experiencing moderate degrees of burnout and perceive a brief ACT workshop for resident burnout as acceptable and helpful, supporting its inclusion in the Resident Training Program.
- Data also provides preliminary evidence that the onset of the third year of residency may be a particularly vulnerable time for burnout.
- Residents were able to learn ACT skills in this format.
- Future directions might examine how best to help residents translate skills to improve patient care.