



Enhancing Mental Health in Obstetrics and Gynecology Residents: Impact of Workload, Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Quality of Life

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Dear Editor-in-chief,

The residency period in Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) is an exceptionally demanding stage of medical training that profoundly affects residents' mental health and job satisfaction. This is largely due to heavy clinical workloads, complex patient care responsibilities, and significant emotional stress. Recent studies report burnout rates exceeding 64%, anxiety affecting around 71%, and depression over 57% among OB/GYN residents. Minority populations, such as Black residents, show even higher incidences of depression and suicidal ideation, emphasizing the critical need for culturally sensitive and targeted mental health interventions.

Quality of life among OB/GYN residents is closely linked to their mental health and levels of job satisfaction. Supportive work environments characterized by effective mentorship, fair and equitable shift scheduling, and ready access to psychological resources significantly enhance well-being. Additionally, structured educational programs that combine clinical practice with theoretical training contribute to improved knowledge, greater professional development, and reduced psychological strain. Addressing these challenges through systematic improvements in workload distribution, organizational support, and comprehensive mental health promotion is essential. Such strategies will not only foster residents' well-being and job satisfaction but also elevate the overall quality of medical education and patient care in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Key Words: Obstetrics and Gynecology residents, Workload, Job satisfaction, Quality of Life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) residency is a pivotal and demanding stage of medical training characterized by intensive clinical duties, academic challenges, and emotionally taxing responsibilities. Residents face high patient acuity, unpredictable schedules, and substantial workloads that contribute to elevated psychological stress. This environment predisposes OB/GYN residents to prevalent mental health concerns such as burnout, anxiety, and depression, with rates reported to exceed 64%, 70%, and 57% respectively in recent international studies (1-4). Minority groups, particularly Black residents, are disproportionately affected, exhibiting higher incidences of depression and suicidal ideation, underscoring the necessity for targeted support measures (3, 5).

Quality of life, mental health, and job satisfaction are deeply interconnected in this population. Supportive workplace environments, including equitable shift distributions, effective mentorship, collegiality, and access to psychological resources, mitigate emotional exhaustion and enhance professional fulfillment (6, 7). Furthermore, combining clinical training with structured theoretical education fosters residents' competence, satisfaction, and overall well-being (6, 7). Despite these insights, many residency programs still lack adequate organizational support and comprehensive mental health promotion strategies tailored to residents' unique demands (2, 4).

Given the critical role OB/GYN residents play in delivering essential reproductive and maternal health services, addressing their mental health challenges is imperative. This article examines the impact of workload, burnout, job satisfaction, and quality of life on OB/GYN residents and highlights the urgent need for systemic interventions to improve their psychological well-being and professional development.

2. RESULTS

The residency period in Obstetrics and Gynecology, due to its clinical complexity, high responsibility load, and intense workload, is among the most challenging phases of medical education. These demanding conditions significantly affect residents' mental health, job satisfaction, and quality of life, making it essential to identify and analyze these factors in order to improve educational structures and psychological support systems (3, 5).

1. **Prevalence of Burnout and Psychological Disorders:** Recent international studies indicate that over 64% of Obstetrics and Gynecology residents suffer from burnout. High prevalence rates of anxiety (70.9%) and depression (57.2%) have also been reported, severely impacting residents' mental health. Among minority groups, such as Black residents, rates of depression and suicidal ideation are even higher, highlighting the urgent need for culturally sensitive and targeted interventions (3, 5).
2. **Role of Workload and Work Environment:** Long working hours, multiple shifts, and heavy clinical responsibilities are key contributors to burnout and mental health issues. In countries like Iran, additional factors such as lack of organizational support and inadequate compensation exacerbate these problems. Poor shift management and inactive welfare programs further increase psychological stress (2, 3, 7).
3. **Job Satisfaction and Its Determinants:** Job satisfaction among residents correlates positively with meaningful work, fair scheduling, and continuous support and appreciation from faculty members. Conversely, programs that neglect residents' mental health are associated with significantly increased dissatisfaction, burnout, and psychological problems (3, 6, 8).
4. **Quality of Life and Supportive Work Environment:** Quality of life is closely linked to mental health and job satisfaction. Supportive factors such as effective mentoring, a collegial and professional environment, mutual respect, and access to psychological resources help reduce emotional exhaustion and improve satisfaction and overall quality of life. Well-structured educational programs integrating clinical and theoretical training additionally

contribute to higher satisfaction and improved knowledge, collectively fostering better resident well-being and professional development (5–7).

5. **Necessity of Psychological and Managerial Support:** Insufficient psychological support, especially regarding fertility-related issues specific to the gynecology and infertility specialty, is a major concern for residents. This gap necessitates intervention by policymakers and educators to develop burnout reduction and mental health promotion programs tailored to residents' needs (5, 7, 8).
6. **Domestic and International Differences and Challenges:** Although burnout and work-related psychological stress are common worldwide among residents, the situation in Iran is aggravated by weak organizational support, inefficient shift management, and unfavorable working conditions. Countries with robust mental health programs and efficient work management report better outcomes in reducing burnout (4, 7–10).
7. **Role of Structured Educational Programs:** Integrating clinical training with structured theoretical education improves residents' clinical competence, satisfaction, and overall mental well-being. Such comprehensive educational approaches foster professional development and help mitigate the psychological strain associated with residency (6, 7).
8. **Recommendations for Improvement:** Addressing these challenges requires systematic interventions, including optimizing shift schedules for fair workload distribution, fostering supportive work environments with consistent mentorship, and implementing training focused on stress management and psychological resilience. These strategies are crucial for enhancing residents' mental health, job satisfaction, and the overall quality of medical education and patient care in Obstetrics and Gynecology (2, 3, 4, 6, 7).

3. CONCLUSION

Obstetrics and Gynecology residents face substantial mental health challenges, including high rates of burnout, anxiety, and depression, which are largely driven by heavy workloads, clinical complexity, and ineffective shift management. These difficulties are further exacerbated by insufficient organizational support and the lack of tailored educational programs focused on mental health promotion. Minority groups, such as Black residents, bear a disproportionately higher burden, highlighting the urgent need for culturally sensitive and targeted interventions.

Improving residents' mental health and job satisfaction requires systematic changes, including equitable workload distribution, optimized shift scheduling, fostering supportive work environments with consistent mentorship, and implementing comprehensive training programs on stress management and resilience. These strategies not only safeguard residents' psychological well-being but also contribute to enhanced quality of medical education and patient care in Obstetrics and Gynecology. Therefore, stakeholders must prioritize these interventions to cultivate healthier training environments that support residents' professional growth, promote overall well-being, and ultimately ensure optimal clinical outcomes for patients.

4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

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