It's a Matter of Time (Management)

In our last article, I discussed the challenges of "physician burnout," its relationship to career satisfaction, and what the studies suggest are factors that correlate with this phenomenon. One significant factor is time management—physicians experiencing a high degree of stress and pressure in their lives often have challenges effectively managing their time and finding an adequate work-life balance. Over the next few months, our series of articles will provide you with strategies to gain greater control over your time and thus, decrease the deleterious effects of poor time management.

In an effort to better manage how one spends one's time, it is first important to address two critical questions:

1. What is important to me (what do I value)?

2. Where and how am I spending my time?

To help you address these two questions, please take a few minutes to complete the table below. When completing the first column, think about what you value most in your life. For example, items that may fall into this column might include time with my family, quality time with my patients, keeping up with the research, exercise, church, service work, etc. Limit the items in this column to about 10 to 15 categories. Once you have identified the main categories or buckets, move on to the second column. For each item in the 1st column, ask yourself what percentage of time you spend in a typical week on this activity. Be honest with yourself. You may want to keep a daily diary for a week or so to help you with greater accuracy.

What is Important to Me?	Percent of Time

Once you have a fairly accurate picture of how you spend your time compared to what you consider to be important in your life, you can now ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I spending enough time on activities that are important to me and/or that I value most?
- How much of my time is being spent on activities that are not on my most important list?
- Am I deriving satisfaction from the majority of my activities?
- Could I be engaged in activities that bring me greater satisfaction and/or contentment?
- What would need to change in order for me to spend more time on activities that are truly important to me?
- How might that affect my overall life and career satisfaction?

Next month we will provide more strategies to help you more effectively manage your time and thus, decrease the risk of burnout and increase the likelihood of greater career/life satisfaction.

Stay tuned!

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