

Surgery Well-being Council Updates

Newsletter, Summer 2022

The Surgery Resident Well-being Council, part of the [Surgical Residency Program](#) at Massachusetts General Hospital, is now in its fifth year of existence. The purpose of the council is to identify and address unique issues affecting the well-being of both the residents collectively and the individual classes.

The Surgery Resident Well-being Council is composed of one-to-two resident representatives from each PGY class, including two PGY-5 wellness chiefs. Multiple faculty members are involved including our [John Mullen, MD](#), residency program director. In this newsletter, we will share updates on our recent initiatives.

Council members for the academic year 2021-2022 included the following faculty: Dr. Mullen; [Motaz Qadan, MD, PhD](#); Beth Frates, MD; [Cornelia Griggs, MD](#); and [Antonia Stephen, MD](#). The following residents served as class representatives: Maggie Westfal, MD, wellness chief; Morgan Hennessy, MD, PhD, wellness chief; Maggie Connolly, MD; Alli Letica, MD; Alyssa Pradarelli, MD; Sarah Halix, MD; Danielle Ellis, MD, MTS; and Andre Souffrant, MD. For the AY 2022-2023, Dr. Connolly and Jon Harrison, MD, will serve as the wellness chiefs. In addition, we are happy to welcome PGY-1 Aviva Mattingly, MD, MS, and research resident Jessica Mueller, MD, as council members.

The Well-being Council has sponsored several initiatives over the past few years, including:

- **Intern Wellness Days.** Each intern is assigned two half-days off throughout the academic year (one in each half of the year). On these days, the intern is relieved of clinical duties at noon with cross-coverage provided by a different intern. This allows the intern time to attend doctor's appointments, run errands, or just enjoy some time to themselves. Since our intern year has a night float system, interns rarely have post-call days to accomplish some of these tasks, which inspired the creation of these wellness days.
- **Well-being Needs Assessment.** On a yearly basis, we send a survey out to the general surgery residents to inquire about their wellness needs. Wellness looks different for each resident and there are different issues that come up in each PGY class, so this allows us to tailor our initiatives. In addition, we send out a weekly virtual suggestion box in our education email for residents to anonymously submit wellness concerns or ideas. The wellness chiefs monitor this suggestion box on a regular basis and bring the feedback to the monthly council meetings.
- **"Ask Me Anything" Series.** This is a series of virtual talks and discussions given by various faculty within the Department of Surgery. The goal is to provide an opportunity for informal discussion of specific topics such as adapting to new attending life, balancing a family/pregnancy in surgical training, what it's like to be a program director, etc. These events also provide residents a low-stress environment to get to know their attendings on a more personal level.
- **THRIVE series.** This was a series of virtual talks put on by several faculty on our Surgery Well-being Council (Dr. Frates, Dr. Griggs and Dr. Stephen) that aimed at providing strategies for residents to cope with the challenges of residency. Some of the topics included: (1) strategies for effective communication and collaboration during difficult conversations; (2) setting boundaries and learning to say "no;" and (3) maintaining priorities and a sense of purpose throughout residency and beyond.
- **Well-being Town Halls.** This is a new initiative from the past year aimed to increase transparency for what our Surgery Well-being Council does as well as promote the conversation and awareness around the importance of well-being during training. Important issues that were raised by residents included back-up/sick call, subsidizing transportation and parking, food stipends, etc. These events inspired the increased annual food stipend provided to residents, as well as the creation of a more formalized sick call system that took effect this academic year.
- **Department-Sponsored Social Events.** Our department leadership has sponsored catering by Harvard Gardens for the residents several times throughout the year to promote comradery, a sense of community and a space for residents to be able to socialize outside of work hours. These have been well attended by residents from all classes. The Surgery Well-being

Council also funded a trivia night attended by many residents and attendings from throughout the department, as well as a free wine-tasting event for residents.

- **Process Groups.** With financial support from our department, we hired a psychologist who meets with each PGY class on a rotating basis. These process groups are held during our protected education time and are a space for each resident class to decompress, debrief about challenges, and address any issues specific to their class or the general residency experience. These process groups have been very well received by the residents. Our psychologist also offers limited individual sessions and can act as a liaison for those residents who are interested in longer term individual therapy.
- **"Great Saves" M&M.** One of our new initiatives this year was replacing a traditional Morbidity & Mortality conference with a "Great Saves" conference. This allowed our residents and attendings a chance to highlight cases of great teamwork and coordination that resulted in excellent patient care.
- **Pool Cabana at The Clubs at Charles River Park.** Effective summer 2022, the residency program has purchased the rights to one of the pool-side cabanas at Charles River Park and has stocked it with a fridge, a grill and furniture. This has provided the residents an opportunity to spend days and evenings off lounging and grilling by the pool with your colleagues and friends.
- **Resident Exercise and Fitness.** Through donations from the faculty and the well-being funds, we have been able to purchase work-out bikes for the Mass General, Newton-Wellesley Hospital and Salem Hospital surgical residents. These provide the opportunity for residents to get a quick workout between cases or a longer ride on a slow call shift.
- **Office Hours.** As wellness chiefs, Dr. Connolly and Dr. Harrison have organized informal office hours one evening per month. These will be opportunities for residents to come vent or chat in a judgement-free zone. Together, we can share similar experience or work through challenges as a team.

The [Mass General Department of Surgery](#) has also been working to enhance well-being at the faculty level. The Faculty Wellness Committee is led by Dr. Stephen, director of wellness, Dr. Frates, director of lifestyle medicine and wellness, and Linda Weinstein, administrative director. The Wellness Committee expanded its membership this year to include representation from several divisions and subdivisions including:

- Christy Cauley, MD, MPH, Division of Gastrointestinal & Oncological Surgery
- Cornelia Griggs, MD, Division of Pediatric Surgery
- Eric Liao, MD, PhD, Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery
- Jahan Mohebbi, MD, MPH, Division of Vascular Surgery
- Motaz Qadan, MD, PhD, Division of Gastrointestinal & Oncological Surgery
- Lana Schumacher, MD, Division of Thoracic Surgery
- Michelle Specht, MD, Division of Gastrointestinal & Oncological Surgery
- Cameron Wright, MD, Division of Thoracic Surgery

The full Wellness Committee meets once a month to discuss current issues and projects. The leadership team meets once a week for follow-up and strategy work. A highlight from 2022 was Grand Rounds and Rocking Chair Rounds with Amy Edmondson, PhD, who discussed psychological safety in the workplace. To help advertise the work of the committee, Dr. Stephen, Dr. Frates and Ms. Weinstein attended division meetings throughout the year. For the third year in a row, the faculty have been offered the opportunity to engage in coaching sessions with a variety of coaches, including Physician Coaches Collaborative and Jill Farmer. Most recently we added David Allen's Getting Things Done Coaching to the offerings.