

# Strategies for promoting mental health in healthcare residents

## Policy brief

Residency Project

10th of January of 2024

### Key Messages:

- ✓ Implementing strategies for promoting mental health aimed at healthcare residents is an essential step for residency programs in Brazil and around the world.
- ✓ A broad mapping of the scientific literature (scoping review) identified several strategies for promoting mental health in residents.
- ✓ The most cited strategies that appear to bring some benefits to the resident involve various aspects of well-being, such as sleep health, expanded social interaction, nutrition, physical activity, mentoring opportunities and access to psychological care.
- ✓ Mindfulness (the practice of full attention); free and confidential psychological screening and assistance; and limiting weekly working hours or shifts were also frequently mentioned as beneficial strategies to residents' well-being.

### Context

During the healthcare residency program, residents are expected to balance out learning, patient care, teaching, and managing overcrowded services throughout their workdays. The demands of this training modality have been associated with reduced sleep quality, reduced exercise frequency, and distance from family and social relationships, culminating in an increase in diagnoses of anxiety, depression, and burnout.

### About the scoping review

The scoping review that was carried out [1] mapped and analyzed strategies that aimed to promote mental health and well-being among residents from different health areas. After the search and selection phases, 161 studies were included.

Distribution of studies by country where they were published



62%

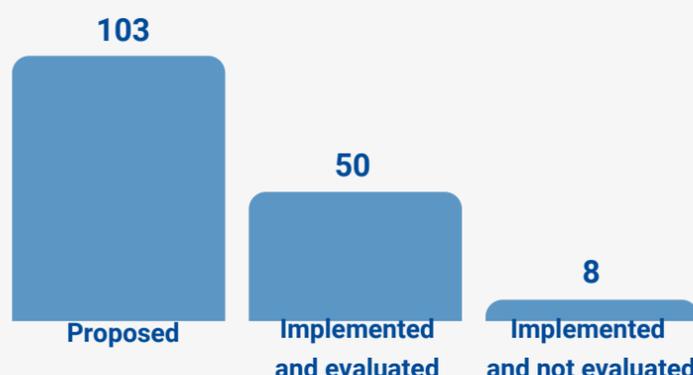


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The strategies identified were organized into the following categories:

1. Proposed (description of an intervention proposal);
2. Implemented and not evaluated (the intervention was carried out, but without having its results/impacts evaluated);
3. Implemented and evaluated (the intervention carried out and its results/impacts were measured).

Distribution of studies by strategy category



### What strategies have been implemented and evaluated that seem to present some benefit?

- Administrative or curricular actions in residency programs, such as implementing a comprehensive well-being program.
- Psychological interventions, including screening, consultations and referrals.

- Practice of mindfulness, or full attention, aimed at managing stress and burnout.
- Interventions to control weekly working hours and/or limit shifts.

➤ **Implemented and evaluated interventions that have immediate application potential:**

In the Brazilian context, some strategies have the potential for immediate implementation, if the residency programs choose to do so. These strategies were selected subjectively, based on studies that implemented and evaluated a strategy .

➤ **Strategy to reduce the duration of residency shifts.**

Shorter shifts have been associated with improvements in residents' mental health and decreased risk of percutaneous injuries and automobile accidents. The impact of shift length on patient care was also observed, indicating a reduction in medical errors during shorter shifts.

➤ **The strategy of practicing team sports for residents before shifts.**

It consists of encouraging the practice of physical activity, being characterized as any type of sport that the resident himself considers to be a team sport, carried out before the shift at the residence program.

➤ **The strategy of self-guided mindfulness practice.**

Encouragement for residents to seek out self-guided meditation or mindfulness practices, carried out on demand, with the help of internet applications, among other tools.

➤ **Barriers and facilitators to adherence to the interventions:**

Most common barriers:

- Stigma
- Career impact
- Confidentiality
- Cost
- Availability

As facilitators, the following were highlighted:

- Social interaction
- Support network
- Self referral to psychological care

 **Implications for practice**

Managers, coordinators/administrators of residency programs can evaluate which of the strategies presented in the scoping review matches the profile of their program, in addition to analyzing possible costs and applicability. The combination of different strategies, including psychological interventions, practicing mindfulness, expanding social interaction, encouraging physical activity, healthy eating and sleeping are some of the highlights.

Providing free or reduced-cost, confidential psychological care during shift breaks may be a potential strategy to increase adherence and it may impact the prevention and management of mental disorders in residents.

This policy brief was prepared by the Health Technology Assessment Center at Hospital Sírio-Libanês (NATS-HSL). The information in this policy brief was extracted from the scoping review developed by the NATS-HSL, as a product of the Residency Project, within the scope of PROADI-SUS. [1] Porto de Toledo, I, Pacheco RL, Colpani, V, Latorraca, COC, Martimbianco, ALC, Riera R, Silva, RB. Strategies for promoting mental health in healthcare residents: a scoping review. Hospital Sírio-Libanês, December of 2023.