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Personal Statement for Mini- Fellowship in Wellness Leadership Application

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I remember the first patient that went into cardiac arrest in front of me. It was one of my first critical care shifts as a new second year resident. He walked into the ER and was able to tell me his story despite the fact that he was in respiratory distress and hypotensive. Within two hours he was intubated. Within three hours, he lost pulses and, finally, within four hours, the patient was pronounced deceased. I was in shock. I ran through the timing of every decision I made, wondering what I could have done better. Within minutes, I was called to evaluate another sick patient, then another after her. The patients continued to pour in until the shift ended. The work didn't stop, even after a patient outcome that felt so tragic to me. More shifts like this followed, feeling strapped for time and resources became norm. I found myself seeking advice from peers, who reflected back many similar feelings.

It was with these shared experiences with my co-residents that my interest in resident wellness and resiliency began. I started to read through the burgeoning literature on wellness that details alarming statistics. Emergency medicine (EM) physicians burn out more than other physicians. EM physicians feel more depersonalized at work and report worse job satisfaction than many other fields. At the beginning of a career in a medical specialty primed for burnout, I want to find solutions. Sensing a need to productively discuss and work through workplace events that contribute to burnout, I worked with the Department of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai to develop a series of training groups modeled after those used in psychiatry residency programs to help residents process secondary traumatic experiences and emotions. Through targeted discussion grounded in the fundamentals of cognitive behavioral theory, faculty help residents to identify stressors and sources of burnout specific to each class year's specific needs. Once stressors are identified, each group works to develop approaches that build resilience.

While the training groups have been initiated at my institution, I feel my work is far from over. It would be an honor to be selected into the CORD Fellowship in Wellness Leadership. With this opportunity, I would utilize the mentorship of the faculty mentor to further develop and study the training groups that are being piloted at Mount Sinai. My goal would be to create a detailed curriculum grounded in research that could be shared with other residency programs, departments and hospitals. Additionally, I hope this opportunity will further refine my leadership skills to become an effective lifetime advocate for physician wellness. Though difficult cases will never get easier, we can equip our physicians with better tools to manage challenging situations.