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Personal Statement
CORD Mini-Fellowship in Wellness Leadership

One night during my first year of medical school one of my best friends shared with me that she has regular thoughts about suicide. She said this has gone on for years and she does not know how to seek help. She shared her plan to drive her car off the road and commented that the highway between her apartment and the school has a lot of hills...

I am passionate about resident and medical student resiliency and wellness because today Karen is alive.

Although early in my medical training, we were fortunate that our medical school provided resources for mental health. Looking back, my experience in helping Karen obtain help was actually somewhat easy. The school prepared us for this exact situation. We knew what to do, how to seek help, and the resources for help were immediately available.

During my residency program's annual retreat, I held a mini wellness-workshop. Activities included an ice-breaker activity, a short lecture exploring wellness, an interactive anonymous survey, and small group discussions to share difficult situations and how they were overcome. The anonymous online survey revealed that many residents admitted to burn out and struggling with anxiety/depression. However, most alarming to me was that one third of my program's current EM residents admitted to having considered suicide at some point in their lives.

I have two projects in mind to implement at my institution. First, I would like to create a segment on resident resiliency/wellness/resources that can be presented during orientation each year. My hope is that for any resident who finds themselves or a colleague in crisis, seeking help can be as easy for them as it was for Karen during medical school. I want to expand upon our program's available resources to provide access to anonymous off-site counseling. Next, I would like there to be a set of ongoing activities throughout the year to promote resident wellness and resiliency. We are fortunate to already have a budget set aside for resident-wide social events, but I hope to expand upon these to include activities that better foster a culture of wellness on an ongoing basis. Possibilities include care packages for the ICU teams, biannual chair massage during conference, attending sporting events, group outdoor activities/sports, meditation, or regular small-group discussions during conference.

Five years later Karen is now in her residency. She has a safety net of family and friends, receives regular psychiatric care, and no longer has suicidal ideation. This is a success story, but I am unfortunately reminded far too often by the news and social media about medical students, residents, and practicing physicians whose lives are tragically lost to suicide. Because of this experience, I am dedicated to improving upon the wellness and resiliency of residents and medical students at Kaweah Delta and beyond. By participating in the inaugural Mini-Fellowship in Wellness Leadership I hope to obtain knowledge, skills, and guidance that will help me effect change.