

WELL-BEING: THE HOLY GRAIL OF HEALTH CARE



As physicians, we know all too well how important it is to be and stay healthy, both mentally and physically. Good mental health allows us to be sharp of mind, which is important when interacting with patients,

when executing complicated procedures in the OR, and while managing a crowded retina clinic. And obviously decent overall physical health enables us to perform surgery while inflicting minimal discomfort and pain on ourselves. More important, being in good shape increases the likelihood of a long and productive career. So how do we attain and sustain a sense of well-being? Consider the four tips below.

No. 1: SLEEP WELL

The average adult requires 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night to feel properly rested.¹ Not getting enough sleep can affect productivity, lead to overeating, and contribute to the onset of conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. We are all busy, and some of us have families, speaking engagements, and/or additional responsibilities that we must juggle. Therefore, it is understandably tough to always get the amount of cherished shut-eye we need. That said, there are some tricks we can use to set ourselves up for a better night's sleep, such as waking up at the same time each day, incorporating meditation into our lives—even for just 5 or 10 minutes each day—and avoiding exposure to blue light at night.

No. 2: EAT WELL

Whether you are a carnivore, omnivore, herbivore, or other, moderation is always a good policy. Treat yourself occasionally, but be sure to include good amounts of fruits and vegetables in your diet because “a diet rich in vegetables and fruits can lower blood pressure, reduce risk of heart disease and stroke, prevent some types of cancer, lower risk of eye and digestive problems, and have a positive effect upon blood sugar, which can help keep appetite in check.”²

No. 3: LIVE WELL

Find things that make you happy. Schedule time for yourself on the calendar if you must. Then use that time: Spend

it with family, get some exercise, or devote yourself to hobbies you care about but rarely have time for. Sure, we are all passionate about what we do professionally, but well-oiled machines need a tune-up every now and again.

No. 4: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Tense in Tennessee? Sleepless in Seattle? Perhaps a change of scenery is in order. Medscape recently released its “Best and Worst Places to Practice” list for 2016 (bit.ly/BESTworst). Taking into account the varying perspectives and needs of young physicians, those in the middle of their careers, and those in their later years of practice, the list identified North Carolina, Texas, Alabama, Idaho, and Ohio as its top five places and named New Mexico, West Virginia, the District of Columbia, Mississippi, and Rhode Island as the five worst places to practice.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

Retina specialists see great numbers of patients with diabetes and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). We tell these individuals to quit smoking, to exercise regularly, to eat a diet rich in green, leafy vegetables and fish, and to maintain normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels. (Incidentally, this issue's cover focus is on AMD. We offer a superb collection of articles starting on page 57 that cover many aspects of managing patients with AMD, including extended-duration therapeutics for wet AMD, the pachychoroid clinical spectrum, home monitoring, and more.)

Getting back to what we were saying: We ask patients to take good care of themselves, so should we not set an example by taking good care of ourselves? According to a paper in *The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, “physicians who practise healthy habits play a key role by helping their patients to adopt healthy lifestyles for primary prevention of chronic diseases.”³ Not every patient is receptive to advice on improving his or her health. Perhaps if we lead by example, our patients will follow suit. ■

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1. National Sleep Foundation. National Sleep Foundation recommends new sleep times. <https://sleepfoundation.org/media-center/press-release/national-sleep-foundation-recommends-new-sleep-times>. February 2, 2015. Accessed May 24, 2016.
2. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Vegetables and fruits. www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/. Accessed May 20, 2016.
3. Oberg EB, Frank E. Physicians' health practices strongly influence patient health practices. *J R Coll Physicians Edinb*. 2009;39(4):290-291.