

# 5

## facts about burnout, moral injury and fatigue in physiotherapists



### 1

#### Burnout is a multifactorial workplace phenomenon

Risk factors for physiotherapists experiencing symptoms of burnout include:

- relentless workloads, financial concerns, lack of control, ethical conflicts
- stress, fatigue, health issues, unsatisfactory workplace relationships, substance misuse and perfectionism.



### 2

#### Burnout has impacts and consequences

The personal toll of burnout on physiotherapists is significant. It can lead to:

- job leaving, decreased job satisfaction, empathic fatigue, cynicism
- difficulty concentrating, irritation, disordered eating, sleep disturbance, low motivation, bodily pains, increased physical and mental health risks.



### 3

#### Moral injury is different from burnout and fatigue

Moral injury describes strong cognitive and emotional responses following involvement in or witnessing of events that violate a person's moral or ethical code. Essential features are:

- shame and guilt
- maladaptive coping strategies such as substance misuse, social withdrawal and self-destructive behaviours
- heightened risk for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicidality.



### 4

#### Compassion fatigue does not mean caring too much

Compassion fatigue refers to emotional exhaustion from empathetically engaging with patients who are experiencing significant distress. Effects may include:

- emotional detachment, diminished empathy or emotional numbness
- decisions to reduce clinical work, change clinical settings or leave the profession altogether.



### 5

#### Strategies should be tailored to the physiotherapist and the workplace

Targeted prevention and intervention strategies include:

- clinical supervision
- boundary setting
- workload adjustment
- access to employee assistance programs
- addressing impact and respect
- downtime outside of work.



Sponsored by:



Proudly brought to you by:



Physiotherapy  
Research  
Foundation