

Stress, Burnout & Physician Wellbeing

C1-C2

MEDICINE

MED005

This lesson explores occupational stress, burnout and self-regulation in doctors through an occupational health consultation and a physician burnout case report. You learn ten key wellbeing terms and practise mixed conditionals, the structures that link a past cause to a present consequence in reflective writing, supervision and appraisal.

YOU CAN NOW

- You can define ten key terms in physician wellbeing and occupational health.
- You can distinguish burnout from moral injury and explain the difference.
- You can build Type A (past to present) and Type B (present to past) mixed conditionals accurately.
- You can use formal inversions such as Had I..., Were I... and Were it not for... in written reflection.
- You can write a reflective paragraph linking past decisions to your present state.

USEFUL PHRASES

- *Looking back on..., the warning signs are now obvious in retrospect.*
- *Can you talk me through the last twelve months?*
- *What you're describing fits the pattern of burnout.*
- *It overlaps with burnout, but it isn't the same.*
- *Had I recognised the early signs, I would be in a very different position now.*
- *But for my mentor's intervention, I would still be on the same rota.*
- *Taking sick leave isn't a moral failure. It's a clinical decision.*
- *I want to acknowledge openly that...*

KEY VOCABULARY

burnout · WHO occupational phenomenon: chronic workplace stress not successfully managed

depersonalisation · A detached, cynical attitude towards patients, often self-protective

compassion fatigue · Erosion of empathy in people who care for the suffering

self-regulation · Monitoring and modulating your own emotional and physiological state

vicarious trauma · Inner change caused by empathic engagement with traumatised patients

emotional exhaustion · Feeling emotionally overextended and depleted of emotional resources

moral injury · Harm from being forced to act against your ethical code

allostatic load · Cumulative biological wear and tear from sustained stress

presenteeism · Working while unwell or impaired, raising the risk of error

psychological safety · A team's shared belief that speaking up will not be punished

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Mixed Conditionals

Type A links a past cause to a present result: past perfect in the if-clause, would + base (or would be + -ing) in the main clause. Type B links a present condition to a past result: were/past simple, then would have + past participle; never use would in the if-clause, and use were, not was, in formal writing.

- *If I had taken annual leave, I wouldn't be feeling this exhausted now.*
- *If I were a more resilient person, I would have asked for help months ago.*
- *Were it not for the early occupational health referral, I would never have recognised what was happening to me.*

Take it further: When you next write a portfolio entry or appraisal reflection, rewrite one plain sentence such as "I didn't take leave, and now I'm exhausted" as a mixed conditional.