

Case Studies

► SCENARIO 1

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DRIVING HOME/COMMUTING

Phil is 31, married and recently became a father. He is in his 3rd year of his residency training in internal medicine. He drives 45 minutes each way to the hospital and typically completes several 12-hours shifts in a 30 day period.

Recently, Phil drove off the road on his way home from work at 6 a.m. Although this was not the first time he had felt tired, it was the fourth time in the past six months he'd had a driven off the road post-call and this time it frightened him. He stopped his car, and walked around outside in the cold air before he continued home. Although he has been avoiding talking to his supervisor and junior staff about driving home exhausted,

this latest incident was the trigger for Phil to tell his wife. Now that he has a child, he feels more strongly that he has to make some sort of change, because his stories about nearly falling asleep on duty or on the way home from work scared her. Phil thought he could avoid an accident, but now realizes that he could hurt himself or others if he does not make a change.

- **How could Phil improve his sleep?**
- **Who should Phil talk to/inform about these near misses?**
- **On average how many hours of sleep should you ideally get each night?**
- **What is the responsibility of Phil's program to help address this serious personal safety issue?**

► SCENARIO 2

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TALKING WITH YOUR TEAM

Maggie is a clinical supervisor for ICU team at a large urban regional healthcare center, and is responsible for overseeing several residents at various stages of their training. She notices one of the senior residents, named Ben, has been routinely nodding off during briefs, and appears unfocused and groggy on the occasions when she does observe him in practice. Of particular concern is that Ben often forgets important patient update details when handing cases over to the oncoming attending. Maggie has observed

that Ben is an excellent physician when he's at the top of his game; however she also knows that the effectiveness of her team and the patient care they deliver becomes compromised when communication isn't clear. Maggie wants to address this with Ben, but knows the whole team is tired and even she herself feels worn out after several long and hectic shifts.

- **How can Maggie bring up her concerns with Ben in a positive and constructive manner?**
- **How can Maggie ensure that she models good self-awareness and effectively manages her influence on her own personal well-being and professional performance?**

► SCENARIO 3

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FOOD/WATER AND CAFFEINE INTAKE

Zainab is a 23 year old resident in her first year, and is finding the transition from medical school to residency challenging. Her demanding schedule and on call hours often leave her feeling drowsy and low-energy, and she has difficulty concentrating when new procedures are being demonstrated. To cope, Zainab has started to drink a large coffee before her shift and will often consume a caffeinated energy drink and a muffin or pastry from the cafe during her break, while attempting to squeeze in a bit of studying. Although she's getting the short-lived energy boost she needs to get through her call

shift, Zainab is finding that she feels increasingly irritated and anxious, and has difficulty falling asleep when her shifts are over. Further, she's finding it increasingly difficult to recall details from regular study sessions and during patient handovers.

- **What might the impact of sugary energy drinks and foods have on Zainab?**
- **What effect does caffeine have on water in the body?**
- **How can Zainab adjust the timing of her caffeine intake to maximize its effectiveness?**
- **On average, what is the minimum amount of water you should drink every day?**

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► SCENARIO 4

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WORKING IN ISOLATION

Jordan is a GP in a remote northern community, providing service for approximately 700 residents, many with complex conditions and with limited access to support and healthcare services. Jordan trained in an urban center but wanted to practice in the north as he comes from a smaller town. He is typically the lone practitioner providing 24 hour on-call care, and often experiences tough working conditions with limited resources and now works with a much smaller team than he'd grown used to during residency. As such, he now has less time to recoup lost hours of sleep and minimal time available for leave. Often, he's responsible for providing emergency care in the early

morning hours. The clinic has had high turnover lately and the morale is quite low, owing to the working conditions and long winter months. When he's off duty, Jordan tends to catch up on sleep and reading or watch TV, and not much else. Although he is committed to making his community healthier, Jordan is aware he's an increased risk of stress and extreme fatigue given the intense burden and limited support available to his practice.

- **What individual level strategies can Jordan use to manage his fatigue while on-call?**
- **Are there changes Jordan can make to his habits outside of work that might help him feel more balanced?**
- **What changes could be made to the overall system that may improve the situation?**