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With the physician suicide rate among the highest of any professional group nationwide, TMA continues to prioritize physician wellness by raising awareness of the issue and advocating for the removal of barriers to practitioners seeking needed help. TMA will also observe Suicide Awareness Month during September, with an emphasis on National Physician Suicide Awareness Day on September 17.

Dr. Mukta Panda, Assistant Dean for Well-Being and Medical Student Education and a Professor of Medicine at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine at Chattanooga, has emphasized the importance of prioritizing physician wellness.

“Physicians must unite and empower one another to take care of themselves,” said Dr. Panda. “The practice of medicine is rapidly changing, and taking care of oneself is the best way to ensure we are equipped to take care of others.”

Dr. Panda has supported this change by promoting the Oath to Self-Care and Well-Being, which she wrote in February 2020 with two other physicians on behalf of the Collaborative for Healing and Renewal in Medicine (CHARM). Intended to supplement the Hippocratic Oath, it was published in the American Journal of Medicine. With this oath, physicians pledge to advocate and partner with one other for a health care educational and delivery system that allows for the invitation to make care of self and team a priority while promoting a culture that fosters the well-being of every member. Rather than placing the onus for self-care on the individual, the new oath calls for a partnership and commitment within the system in which physicians study and work.



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Dr. Panda also promotes the exercise of self-care methods, including “Relax, Rejuvenate, and Rejoice.” These “three R’s” remind team members to take a break, re-charge when necessary, take time for something they love, celebrate wins, one another, and positive surprises. She says these activities are not only beneficial to physicians, but necessary for improved overall well-being.

“It is important that we reflect together,” said Dr. Panda, “Especially on what gives us meaning and purpose, and what are our pain points. Only then are we able to provide the best care to our patients, advocate for them and our vocation, and thrive in our roles.”

In recognition of September as Suicide Awareness Month, TMA has made resources available to members while continuing to raise awareness. The organization’s Physician Wellness Resource Center is available at tnmed.org/wellness. TMA also plans to bring [legislation](#) once again in 2024 that seeks to remove stigmatizing questions on licensure, renewal, and credentialing applications, which may serve as barriers to seeking routing mental health treatment. Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis may seek help by calling the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.