Keeping it all in Balance

The demands of a cardiology fellowship can result in intense stress. Keeping it all in balance requires self-awareness and a commitment to using downtime to restore well-being, says Suzanne Kunkele, Ph.D., H.S.P.P., who for 10 years has counseled medical students, residents, and fellows as Director of Counseling Services & Wellness at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis.

Jon George, M.D., will finish an interventional cardiology program at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia in June, putting a cap on seven years of postgraduate training. Every other day you’ll find him at the gym working out after his shift is done. Then there are the basketball and soccer leagues that call his name. There are the weekend drives with his wife to nearby Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, with camera in hand to capture images of historic sites or local scenery that he will later frame for display. Even longer vacations have taken him to the Virgin Islands, Paris and Thailand.

“‘It’s always been a priority of mine to make time to do things outside of medicine,’” Dr. George says. “‘Having time off definitely rejuvenates you.’”

For many fellows in training (FITs), a cardiology fellowship falls at an important crossroads in their personal lives, one that includes marriage and kids. For them, their interest outside training is family. Lan Luo, M.D., is just finishing her second year as a cardiology fellow at Tulane University in New Orleans. She is also a mother of two: a two-year-old son and a nine-year-old daughter.

“My free time is with my kids and my husband,” Dr. Luo says. “I want to be there for my daughter’s piano performances, I want to help. In Dr. Luo’s case, her husband is supportive of her demanding career, and her parents help her keep things in balance.

“‘It really comes down to knowing what your values are and prioritizing what’s important to you,” she says. “‘That’s what allows you to get up each day with passion and to experience authentic happiness and a sense of inner peace.’”

Setting Priorities is Key to Finding Time for Relaxation, Family

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Suzanne Kunkele, Ph.D., H.S.P.P., who directs Counseling Services & Wellness at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, agrees.
How to Keep it all in Balance

The demands of a cardiology fellowship can result in intense stress. Keeping it all in balance requires self-awareness and a commitment to using down-time to restore well-being, says Suzanne Kunkle, Ph.D., H S.P.F., who for 10 years has counseled medical students, residents and fellows as Director of Counseling Services & Wellness at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis.

“You can get so used to the adrenaline rush that when you have down time, you lose the ability to appreciate the small things that are richly complex,” she says. “Fellows have to be self-aware and know they are at risk for burn-out if they push beyond normal human limitations.”

Here are some tips for alleviating stress and achieving work-life balance:

- Know your values and priorities.
- Do a monthly self-assessment for anxiety, depression, stress and burnout.
- Know when to ask for help. It is not a sign of weakness to need time for self-care. Ignoring this need is a direct route to emotional or physical manifestations of stress. Shove for interdependence, not total independence.
- Use your off-time well. Don’t fill all your time off with chores, activities, and time wasters. You need quality relaxation time.
- Weave family into your off-time tasks including running errands, exercising or watching movies together.
- Block electronic communication during part of your down time so that you really are off work.
- Learn to delegate at work and at home—even if you have to pay someone to mow, clean, repair, run errands or cook.
- Choose your battles with family, colleagues, friends, and staff. Learn how to quickly resolve conflicts both at work and at home. The emotional burden of lasting conflicts can add to your stress during training.
- Have your own primary care doctor and get regular checkups.
- Learn stress management techniques, including progressive muscle relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing, guided visualizations, enjoyable exercise, yoga and mindfulness. Five minutes can make a huge difference in how you feel at the end of the day.
- Eat healthy foods; remember your food groups.
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Family support is essential,” she says. “When you choose cardiology, you know you’ll have a busy life every day. It’s a whole family decision.”

Making time for relaxation, fitness and family is not only personally rewarding, it can make you a better doctor if it enables you to truly listen and be present for your patients, says Peter Hagan, M.D., who directs the Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship Training Program at the University of Michigan Hospitals in Ann Arbor.

“It’s very difficult to bring your ‘A’ game to work if you’re not a happy person, if you’re not well rested and well rounded,” he says. “It’s very difficult to be a caring, thoughtful physician when your life is all work and no play.”

Although it’s mostly up to individual FITs to find ways to relax and de-stress, fellowship directors can set the tone, Dr. Hagan says. At the University of Michigan, it starts with recruitment. “We try to select well-rounded people who will make good colleagues,” he says. “We are constantly reminding and encouraging them to act as a team.”

His FITs are a social group, playing on a league softball team and getting together for sporting events and barbecues. To further encourage bonding and relieve winter doldrums, Dr. Hagan sends first-year FITs to the ACC annual scientific meeting. “We try to select well-rounded people who will make good colleagues,” he says. “We are constantly reminding and encouraging them to act as a team.”

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3. Submit the completed application packet including, the signed application form and attachments, letters of sponsorship and payment of your annual dues and nonrefundable processing fee.

To make the process easier, all membership forms are available on our web site at www.acc.org/about/join_acc.htm.

The Credentialing and Membership Committee meets twice each year to review applications and make determinations on accepting membership applications, and will contact you once a decision has been made regarding your application. If you have any questions, contact our Resource Center at any time at 202.375.6000 ext. 5603. We look forward to receiving and reviewing your materials!

Are you graduating from training this year?

Congratulations! It’s time to take your first steps on the path to becoming a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology (F.A.C.C.)

This is a significant event in your professional life, one which brings a certain amount of change. Upon graduating from training, your membership will be converted to Affiliate status, which entitles you to free benefits and membership through 2009, and a discounted membership through 2010.

You are also limited to one sponsor from your training program, and relatives may not sponsor you.

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Preparing for your Board certification can be a time filled with angst and stress. As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, it is important to manage stress well and step away on occasion to maintain your mental and physical well-being. The American College of Cardiology can help you face the challenge of Board certification in a less stressful way with educational programs, products and tools while you implement physical strategies to manage and reduce your stress.

As we recommended previously, developing a habit of regular exercise not only improves cardiovascular health but also reduces physical and mental stress. Take your work-out on the road to attend the ACCF/SCAI Premier Interventional Cardiology Overview and Board Preparatory Course or the ACCF Cardiovascular Board Review for Certification and Recertification, each of which offer Interactive Study Sessions which can be taken concurrently with the Board Review programs.

Another way to reduce stress is to develop a study plan ahead of time. The Board review can seem daunting, but by setting several short-term knowledge goals over the months leading up to the exam and taking regular self-assessment tests, you can manage your progress with ease. Our collection of products including CathSAP® 3 and ACCSAP® 7 can help you to identify your knowledge gaps and target future study prior to the exam. The College’s Meetings on Demand Products also offer vital information for your test preparation that can be used whether you are attending a program or studying at home.

Let these ACCF Programs and Products make Board Preparation Easier:

**CathSAP® 3**
Stay up-to-date on all the latest developments in the rapidly evolving field of interventional cardiology with this self assessment program from the ACCF and the SCAI. CathSAP® 3 features both a core curriculum of interventional cardiology plus hundreds of self-assessment questions so you can test your clinical knowledge and identify areas for further study – an ideal tool to prepare for the Interventional Board exam. The information, written by a panel of world-renowned experts, is presented in short modules so you can easily get through meaningful chunks of information in a relatively short period of time.

**ACCSAP® 7**
The Adult Clinical Cardiology Self-Assessment Program covers the core curriculum of clinical cardiology and is an invaluable resource for honing and testing your clinical knowledge skills through self-assessment. ACCSAP® 7 features 23 chapters of clinically relevant syllabus text, hundreds of peer-reviewed, ABIM-style self-assessment questions and a convenient study guide featuring the key points from each chapter.

**2009 ACCF/SCAI Premier Interventional Cardiology Overview and Board Preparatory Course**
August 21 - 23, 2009
The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas
This program offers an unbiased and up-to-date, evidence-based review of interventional cardiology, including basic science, pharmacology, imaging and procedural selection and technique. Maximize your time by signing up for the optional Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Session. Register today at www.acc.org/ivboard.

**The ACCF Cardiovascular Board Review for Certification and Recertification**
September 8 - 13, 2009
The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Las Vegas, Nev.
This intensive review course will provide you with an expansive, contemporary and in-depth summary of cardiovascular diseases with emphasis on pathogenesis, pathophysiology, natural history, epidemiology, and evidence-based guidelines for diagnostic assessment and clinical management. Maximize your time by signing up for the optional Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Session. Register today at www.acc.org/cvboard.

Let the American College of Cardiology Foundation provide you with the tools you need to prepare for certification.
Experience More of ACC.09 & i2.09 with iScience 2009!

As a Fellow in Training, learning is your number one priority. ACC.09 and i2.09 offered education in a variety of learning pathways. If you were unable to make it to Orlando, you may still access the education presented through our new offering, iScience. iScience is a comprehensive digital library of education presented at ACC.09 and i2 Summit. Get nearly 200 hours of education, including Late-Breaking Clinical Trials and other valuable sessions from the meeting.

Hours of education included are Cardiac Arrhythmias, Cardiac Function & Heart Failure, Congenital Cardiology Solutions (Pediatric and Adult Congenital Cardiology), General Cardiology: Hypertension, Lipids & Prevention, Imaging & Diagnostic Testing, Lifelong Learning, Myocardial Ischemia & Infarction, Quality of Care & Outcomes Assessment, Special Topics, Valvular Heart Disease, Vascular Disease and Intervention/i2 Summit.

Each presentation includes the presenters’ slides with synchronized audio and full-motion video.

As a Fellow in Training, you can purchase the iScience DVD and online access for only $299 and online access only for $249. For more information or to purchase, visit www.sessions2view.com/acc_library.

Talk Back to your Fellow FITs!

Have a question about studying for the Boards? Need to know the best programs to attend as an FIT? Want to talk about your training and what to expect beyond? Touch base with other Fellows in Training experiencing the same day to day challenges as you! The Fellows in Training Talk Back program on CardioSource.com allows you to talk about anything on your mind with other FITs, bounce ideas off one another, post suggestions and more. Join a current conversation or join a new one. Just go to CardioSource.com, click on Fellows in Training, and follow the “Talk Back” icon to begin talking with your peers today.