

Abstract:

This paper describes the experiences of physicians-in-training at a public hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, where medical professionals practice in an environment characterized by both significant lack of resources and patients with HIV/AIDS in historically unprecedented numbers. The data reported here are part of a larger study examining ethical dilemmas in medical education and practice among physicians in East Africa. A questionnaire and semi-structured interview were completed by fifty residents in four medical specialties, examining social and emotional supports, personal and professional sources of stress, emotional numbing and disengagement from patients and peers, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression. The factors affecting resident well-being are found in this study to be more complex than previous interviews suggested. This study highlights the fact that as a result of working in an environment characterized by poor communication among hospital staff as well as a lack of resources and high numbers of patients with HIV/AIDS, residents' perceptions of themselves – their technical proficiency, their ability to care and feel for others and themselves, and for some their entire sense of self – are significantly affected. Also affected are the patients they work to treat