

# A Look at the Impact of Attendee Health and Wellness on Events

Prevention, Detection and Response standards on how conference events should operate.

Ailm Medical Compendium 08.20.2022

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## Introduction

Concerns about attendee health and well-being have dictated nearly every aspect of how face-to-face events are held. The importance of an adaptable and responsive event health and wellness plan is demonstrated by a collection of articles and analysis with the focus of the impact of plan preparedness and execution on both physiological and physical health and well being risks that may impact events and their attendees.

In the Global Wellness Institute's 2021 "Global Wellness Trends Report," [\(1\)](#), the authors explain that the pandemic has forced planners to reinvent their gatherings in a way that puts health at the center of virtually every decision — and that is likely to continue.

"People are seeking ways to embrace wellness, and new models of thoughtfully choreographed events with wellness could be just the 'nudge' they need," states the report. It describes this trend of putting "wellness at the core" of events as a way to reinforce "the importance of what is now top of mind everywhere — health, safety, strengthening immunity, and employing protocols and technologies that can mitigate risk."

The Haute team publication [\(8\)](#) notes business is personal, so the first place they like to start when thinking about wellness and attendees is getting to know the audience. How can you craft a pre-event strategy that lets you get to know attendees and individuals? How can you build meaningful experiences for a whole range of personas that will be engaging with your event?

Included is Morgan Connacher, CSEP, vice president, events and special programs at Haute, says we have all been in silos in our professional and personal lives to varying degrees during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that being able to safely bring people together in person, in real life, creates the ideal opportunity for incorporating wellness into all facets of an event. "The act of meeting in person again fuels wellness consciously and subconsciously," Connacher says.

As Connacher says, wellness is an approach to the entire strategic planning process, not just certain aspects of the event.

## Event Health and Wellness Risk Management

A systematic review to better recognize the risks and for better analysis and understanding noted in publication [\(9\)](#), where the risks were classified into the following five domains:

1. **Environmental** -such as heat, cold, humidity of the environment.
2. **Individual** -such as age and sex.
3. **Public Health** -such as water and food health.
4. **Psychological** -such as participants' behavior and risks associated with events.
5. **Management** -such as risk assessment and availability of caregiver personnel.

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Where it states that a successful implementation of events and reducing risks related to people's health requires attention to all recognized risks and integrated management, as neglecting a risk may threaten the health of all participants.

While the risk factors may overlap domains, our emphasis is primarily on event health and wellness focused on **the state of both psychological and physical health stability with concierge medicine prevention.**

Recent collaborations with major metropolitan convention centers and health care systems offering medical concierge services "...gives our conventions and tradeshow a vast network of healthcare services and expertise that prioritizes the safety of our guests," said Florida's Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) Executive Director Mark Tester in publication [\(13.\)](#) . "This groundbreaking industry collaboration ... elevates our rigorous protocols and is a testament of our commitment to keeping attendees healthy....". The OCCC's strategy provides an industry-defining standard on how conventions will operate in the future. "This new personalized concierge program gives planners the tools, access and comfort that our destination, convention center and expert medical professionals have with them every step of the process to keep attendees safe."

### Knowing The State of Attendees' Psychological Well Being

The Impact of Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Stress on Health, Engagement, and Productivity

Research on burnout and compassion fatigue syndromes and stress have been widely covered and was and is a real concern in various sectors well before the pandemic and will impact the global society as a whole for an unknown or well researched period of time which play heavily on both psychological and physical health.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Noted in publication [\(3.\)](#), The main protective factors were resilience and social support. Compassion fatigue is a normal development after long-term or intense exposure to trauma. Burnout is sometimes called the erosion of the soul due to its destructive path.

When we think about the experience of living through the last two years—a global pandemic, a mass movement against systemic racism, an invasion of Ukraine—it becomes a wonder how humans are coping...We're collectively drained, overwhelmed and losing our patience.

The main results we found showed an increase in the rate of burnout, dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and compassion fatigue; a reduction in personal accomplishment; and levels of compassion satisfaction similar to those before the pandemic. Therefore, it is not surprising that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the quality of life of professionals, aggravating pre-existing problems such as burnout. Burnout, or professional burnout, is a syndrome that occurs in service sector workers subjected to stressful situations, and can be defined as the "result of chronic stress in the workplace that has not been successfully managed".

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The United Way of the National Capital Area gauged what empathy burnout looks like in the U.S. in publication [\(4.\)](#). Surveyed 1,022 Americans across various demographics and all 50 states from March 10 through March 15, 2022. Overall, the empathy ratings of respondents decreased by 14% during the pandemic. The survey respondents were asked which current events have contributed to empathy burnout the most:

- 60% say the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- 49% say police brutality.
- 48% say the pandemic's toll on mental health.
- 47% say the U.S. capitol riots in January 2021.
- 41% say the death toll caused by COVID-19.

So, what are common indicators of empathy burnout? When asking which characteristics of empathy burnout respondents were experiencing most, the majority say:

- 55% feel extremely overwhelmed.
- 47% lack the energy to care about things around you.
- 42% feel angry or irritable.
- 42% isolate themselves from others.

The Gallup's publication [\(5.\)](#) revealed only 21% of employees are engaged at work and 33% of employees are thriving in their overall wellbeing. Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic era put a halt to a long period of gradual but general improvement among the world's workers. This matters for global economic dynamism. Gallup estimates that low engagement costs the global economy US \$7.8 trillion and accounts for 11% of GDP globally. Gallup's analysis of 112,312 business units in 96 countries found a strong link between engagement and performance outcomes, such as retention, productivity, safety and profitability.

How people experience work influences their lives outside of work. Employees who consistently experience high levels of burnout at work say their job makes it difficult to fulfill their family responsibilities. They are also 23% more likely to visit the emergency room.

When employees are engaged and thriving, they experience significantly less stress, anger and health problems. Nevertheless, globally, only 9% of employees are in that thriving and engaged category — while the majority (57%) of the world's employees are not engaged and not thriving.

Organizations need to think about the whole person, not just the worker. Leaders need to add wellbeing measurements to their executive dashboards. This can alert them to critical warning signs that do not show up on traditional spreadsheets. They also need to prioritize employee wellbeing as part of their employer brand promise. When leaders take responsibility for the wellbeing of their workers, the result is not only productive organizations, but thriving individuals, families and communities.

A 2020 Bank of America study [\(6.\)](#) found that 57% of employees connect well-being to productivity. "The financial burden of lost productivity among workers with major depression alone is estimated at \$51 billion annually," said Boese. "It's pretty clear that unaddressed mental

health challenges will just lead to lost productivity. And I also think it's obvious that inadequate mental healthcare support leads to lost productivity and drives presenteeism and absenteeism." In a major long-term study, companies that had the best corporate cultures, that encouraged all-around leadership initiatives and that highly appreciated their employees, customers and owners grew 682 percent in revenue. During the same period of evaluation — 11 years — companies without a thriving company culture grew only 166 percent in revenue. This means that a thriving company culture leads to more than four times higher revenue growth. Company culture and employee engagement go hand in hand and a business focusing on employee engagement and improving their company will enjoy the benefits of increased revenue, increased productivity and increased employee engagement.

## Knowing The State of Attendees' Physical and Public Health Risks

With empathy burnout and compassion fatigue, stress comes naturally then physical illness and susceptibility to public health risks.

"You're more likely to catch an illness or infection while traveling," says Dr. Constantine George in publication [\(16.\)](#) along with Olympic Sports Nutrition Consultant Dr. Mike Israetel agrees. "First of all, be as stress free as you can," he says. "Whatever about traveling you can't change, don't worry! And if you can relax, do it." Remember, you may be in control of your wellness destiny. The best way to stay healthy when traveling is to start healthy. "The biggest take away I can give you is that the risk of getting sick while traveling usually is in proportion to the health of the person before they travel," says Dr. Rusha Modi, Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine at USC's Keck School of Medicine. "While barrier protection (washing hands, making sure skin cuts are covered with bandages, etc.) and controlling contact exposure is essential, the fact is that our bodies are constantly exposed to germs of various types 24/7. Healthy host immunity is essential in this regard." The better you take care of yourself when you're not traveling, the better you feel when you are.

Research revealed in publication [\(11.\)](#) are the main concerns of health-care system in mass-gatherings include infectious diseases such as diseases transmitted through the respiratory system, foodborne diseases, waterborne diseases, injuries, car crashes, heat exhaustion, insect bites, noncommunicable diseases, and terrorism.

Most gatherings reported communicable diseases, noncommunicable diseases, injuries due to stampede, and terrorist attacks to cause high death rates.

In addition to the endemic and seasonal diseases (due to water, food, and respiratory diseases), the health system is faced with muscle strain, dizziness, headaches, asthma and respiratory problems, limb amputation, heat stroke, and abdominal pain, all of which demand special care.

The Purple Guide for Event Safety [\(12.\)](#) included detailed information to help the decision-making process, including a delightfully simple calculation for the number of first aid personnel to put on duty. The guide suggested a minimum number of first aiders of two per 1,000 attendees, unless your numbers went above 3,000, at which point it became more complicated. These numbers

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were based on an estimate that 1%-2% of an audience will seek medical assistance per event day, on average. –Keep in mind these numbers were prior pandemic.

The risk assessment may indicate the need for the provision of medical practitioners on site.

Summarized are the extracted risks of articles according to individual domains noted previously. While different risks threaten the health of people in Mass Gatherings (“MG”), operating a MG may result in recognizing the problems and shortages of health-care system, leading to creativity and passion of staff, thereby providing a chance to develop health plans, personnel training, evaluation of the health-care system, as well as testing communication systems along with inter- and intra-coordination.

The goals of health and medical care at mass gathering events are to: Provide initial stabilization on-site including expedient critical care interventions, treatments, and medications to participants, support staff, and spectators. Decrease the burden on host jurisdictional resources, including EMS and healthcare infrastructure.

**If your attendees feel safe and secure, so can you. You can't expect to hold an event if attendees are scared for their health. That means meetings and events can only come back when attendees feel comfortable enough to attend. So, a health risk mitigation plan is essential.**

The keys to good health risk mitigation are based on three elements: prevention, detection and response. All of the interventions you want to include in your health security plan will fall into one of these three categories. By clearly laying out the steps you're taking to protect the health of every meeting stakeholder, you can give your attendees peace of mind knowing every action considers best means of preventing the spread of COVID-19 at the event, detecting when attendees are sick and being able to quickly respond and manage an outbreak, should it occur.

## The Adapting Response and Care of Concierge Healthcare Providers

The Impact of Healthcare Therapies, Service, and Technology on Health, Engagement, and Productivity

A Concierge Healthcare Provider is there to exceed an individual's expectations of hospitality and meet them where they are with a smile, an answer, and a continuum of personalized care.

Concierge Medicine Today's publication [\(14.\)](#) shared Concierge Medicine is about providers that work hard to exceed the expectations of every single person under their care (aka the Patient, consumer, customer, guest, client, VIP, partner, or employee). They're efficient, responsive, resourceful, knowledgeable and experts at problem solving and excel at relationship building. They use only efficient technology and the latest precision medicine test(s) that create a better relationship between Patient and Provider. They find the latest evidence based medicine insight to make the most qualified decisions and present that evidence to their patient. They have access to some of the best in class specialists and facilities in the world. They realize that a little encouragement on the phone and in person means more than an office visit. They welcome, inform, and serve every person who walks or calls their practice. They realize that healthcare is

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also about the little things and that caring is part of the prescription. They provide a remarkable guest and patient experience for everyone and they understand that experience depends on a number of factors: staff training, communication, accessibility, leadership, signage, facilities, and the overall “feel” of the office or practice. Their goal, in every interaction with every patient is simple.

Healthcare is evolving and adapting the focus of health systems and providers by changing the system and adapting the view of a ‘consumer’ rather than patient and meeting them where they are.

McKinsey & Company’s article [\(7\)](#) states Today’s healthcare system is primarily organized around the stakeholders who deliver and finance, rather than utilize, that system. Payers spend a large portion of their time negotiating with providers, and both payers and providers spend time negotiating with pharmaceutical manufacturers or other stakeholders.

The result is a system from which the consumer is largely disengaged. Yet while we regret the lack of engagement from consumers in their health, the same consumers seek solutions to enhance their health and well-being and spend an estimated \$400 billion outside the formal medical system. Our research finds that consumers define wellness around the following areas: better health, better fitness, better nutrition, better appearance, better sleep, and better mindfulness. These elements often tie into an ability to be present and effective at work. Poor sleep, for example, correlates to less attendance and decreased productivity at work. Effective engagement requires creating a personalized experience for consumers centered around the ways they define health and wellness.

As stated in source [\(14\)](#), an article published by Hospitality Technology in February of 2018, stated “Three Ways Technology Will Transform Luxury Concierge in 2018” — For decades, the luxury concierge industry has been focused on very personal, high touch interactions, centered on delivering exceptional experiences. Because of this, technology has remained behind-the-scenes.

Fortunately, times are changing. Driven by customer expectations for increased digital connectivity, universally fast-paced lifestyles, demand for instant gratification, and smartphone applications permeating every aspect of our lives, the luxury concierge industry is developing ways to enhance the customer experience by integrating traditional services with new, cutting edge technology. To stay relevant, concierge and customer loyalty companies must speed up the pace of innovation and adopt new strategies, while also striking the right balance between dedicated human interaction and digital automation. This “Human + Digital” approach is critical to foster deeper relationships, deliver more personalization, and curate richer experiences for customers – at scale.

## Conclusion

Awareness and attention to health and wellness is heightened and is not going away in the foreseeable future. As a result, both attendees and meeting planners have shared concerns about attendee health and well-being before, during, and after an event. Careful thought of the



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event's value is weighed by the attendee's current psychological and physical state in addition to the risks and stress of travel, person-to-person contact are at the forefront of the decision to attend.

When people have a feeling of psychological and physical health and well being they are more engaged and productive. To support and promote a holistic approach to the planning and execution of events, an adaptable and responsive event health and wellness plan is imperative to prevent potential risks that could impact the event and their attendees.

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