

# **Moral Injury: How to Recognize and Address?**

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# IF I BETRAY THESE WORDS

MORAL INJURY IN MEDICINE

AND WHY IT'S SO HARD

FOR CLINICIANS TO

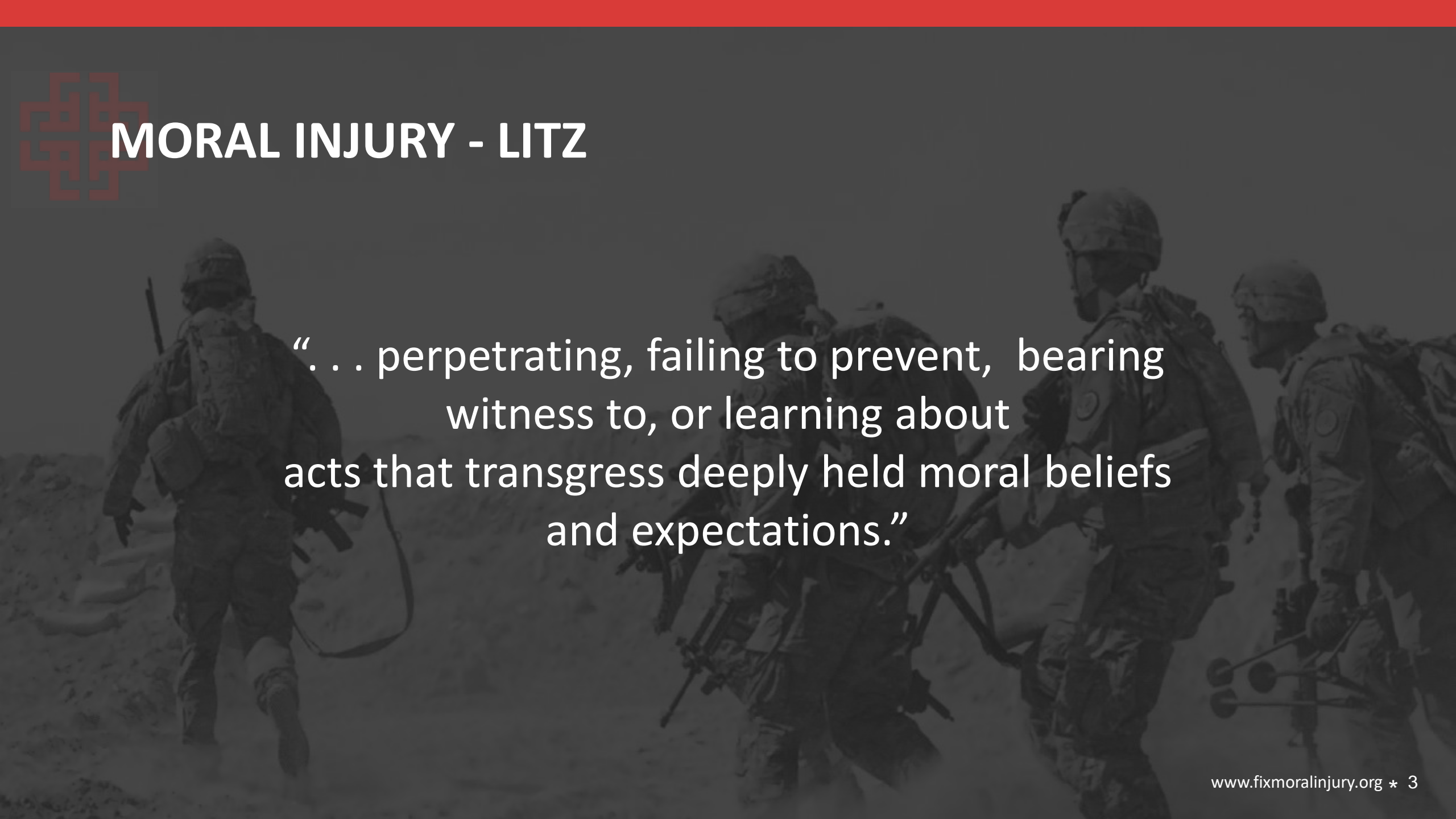
PUT PATIENTS FIRST

**WENDY DEAN, MD**

**WITH SIMON TALBOT, MD**



# MORAL INJURY - LITZ



“... perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”

# OATHS – DEEPLY HELD MORAL BELIEFS

**Hippocrates,  
5th century BC**

*In every house where I  
come I will enter only  
for the good of my  
patients.*

**Declaration of  
Geneva**

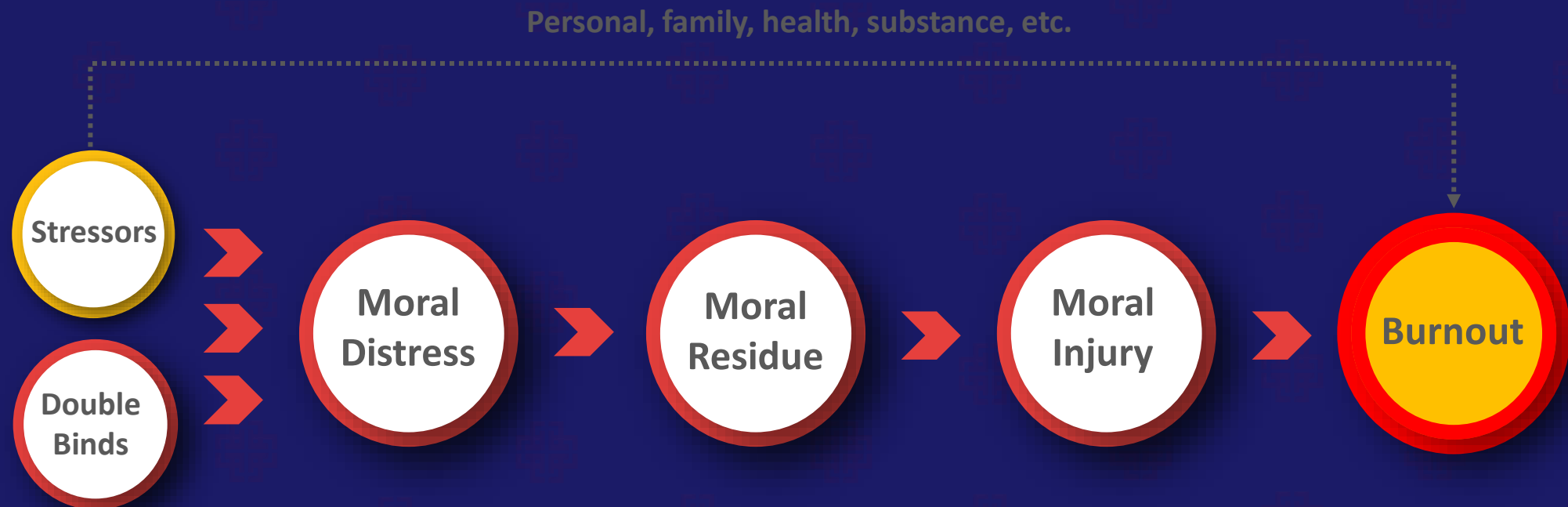
*The health of my  
patient will be my first  
consideration.*

**The Oath of the  
Healer**

*I shall always act in  
the best interest of my  
patient.*



# HOW IS BURNOUT RELATED TO MORAL INJURY?



# Pandemic pushes U.S. doctor burnout to all-time high of 63%

SEP 15, 2022 • 5 MIN READ



**Sara Berg, MS**

Senior News Writer



PRINT PAGE



AMA NEWS WIRE



**Pandemic pushes U.S. doctor burnout to all-time high of 63%**

Sep 15, 2022



## MORAL INJURY - SHAY

“Betrayal of what is right  
by someone who holds legitimate authority  
in a high-stakes situation”

Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character, 1994

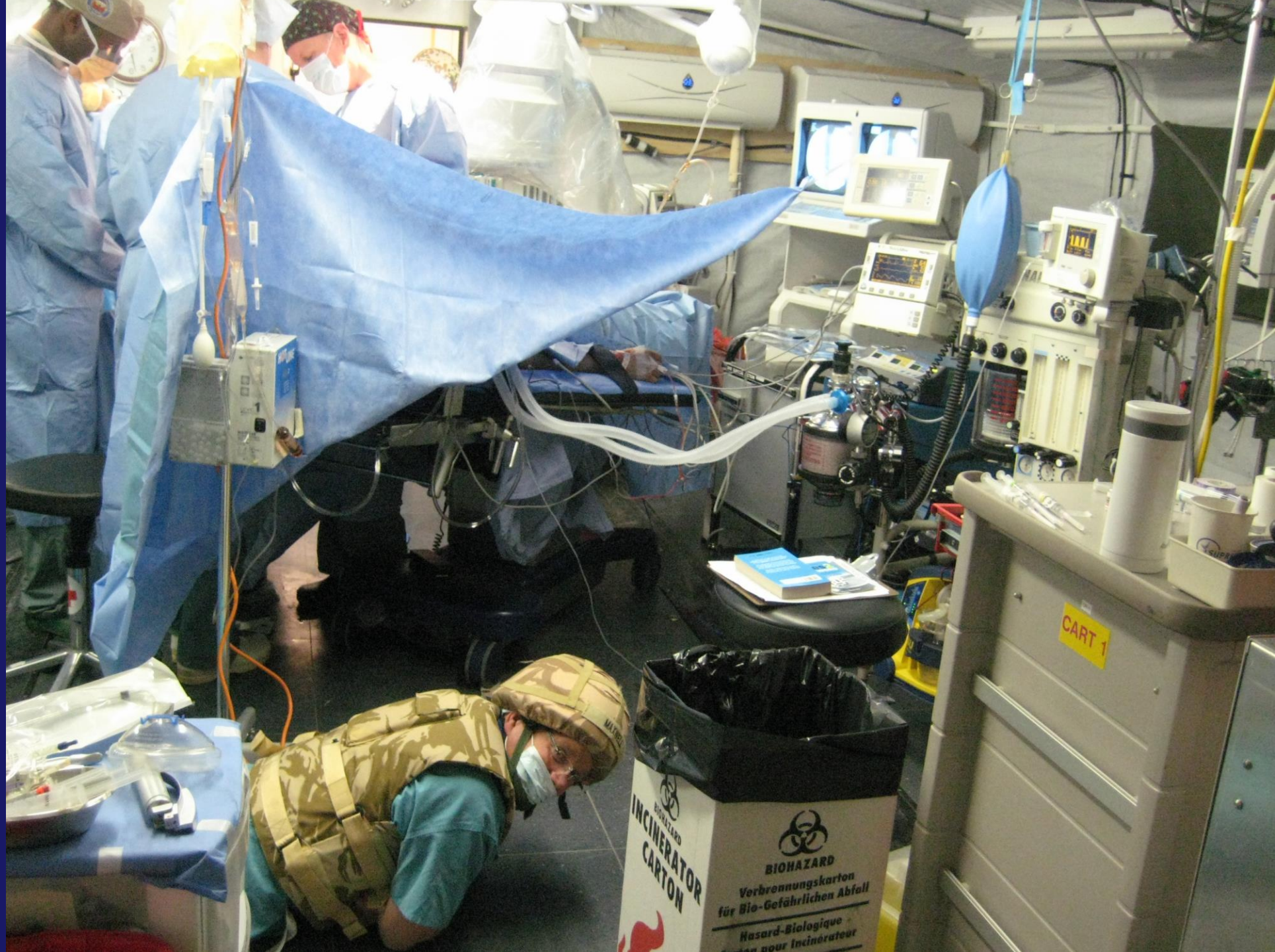
## **Pelvic Fractures in the Elderly**



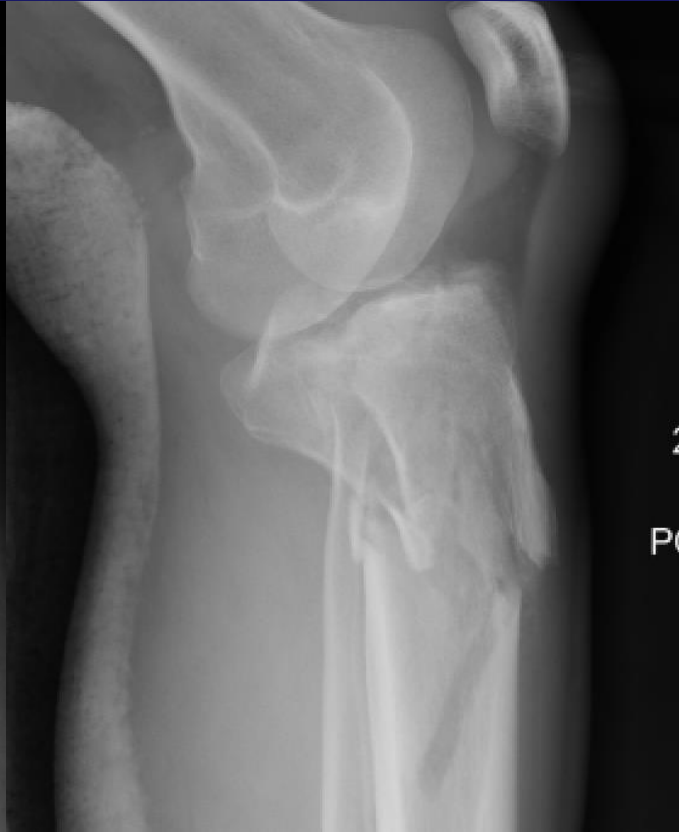












# HOUSE OF HEALTHCARE



## **Administration**

Business Ethics

Friedman Doctrine

Keep the Organization Alive

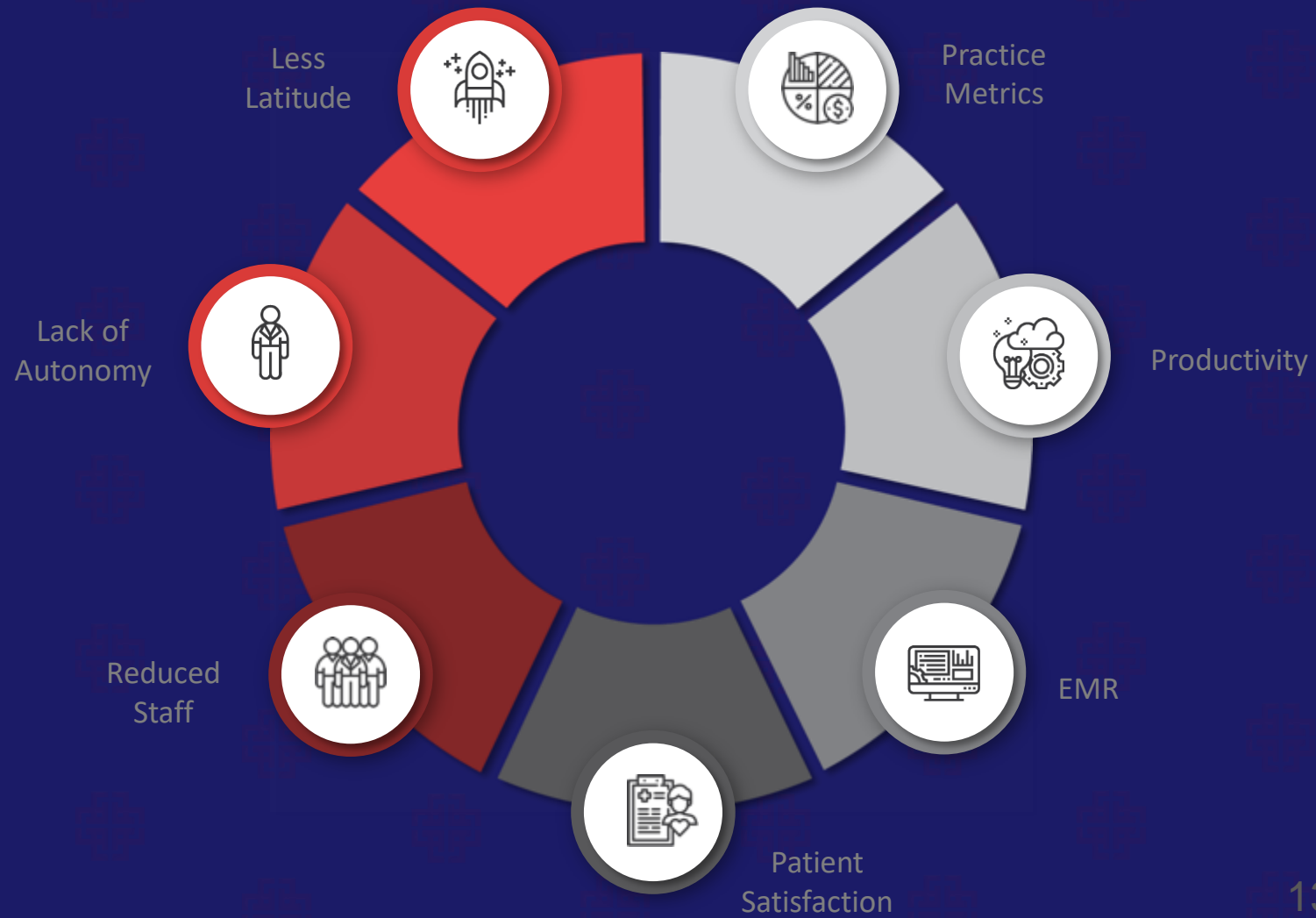
## **Clinical Care**

Medical Ethics

Hippocratic Oath

Keep the Patient Alive

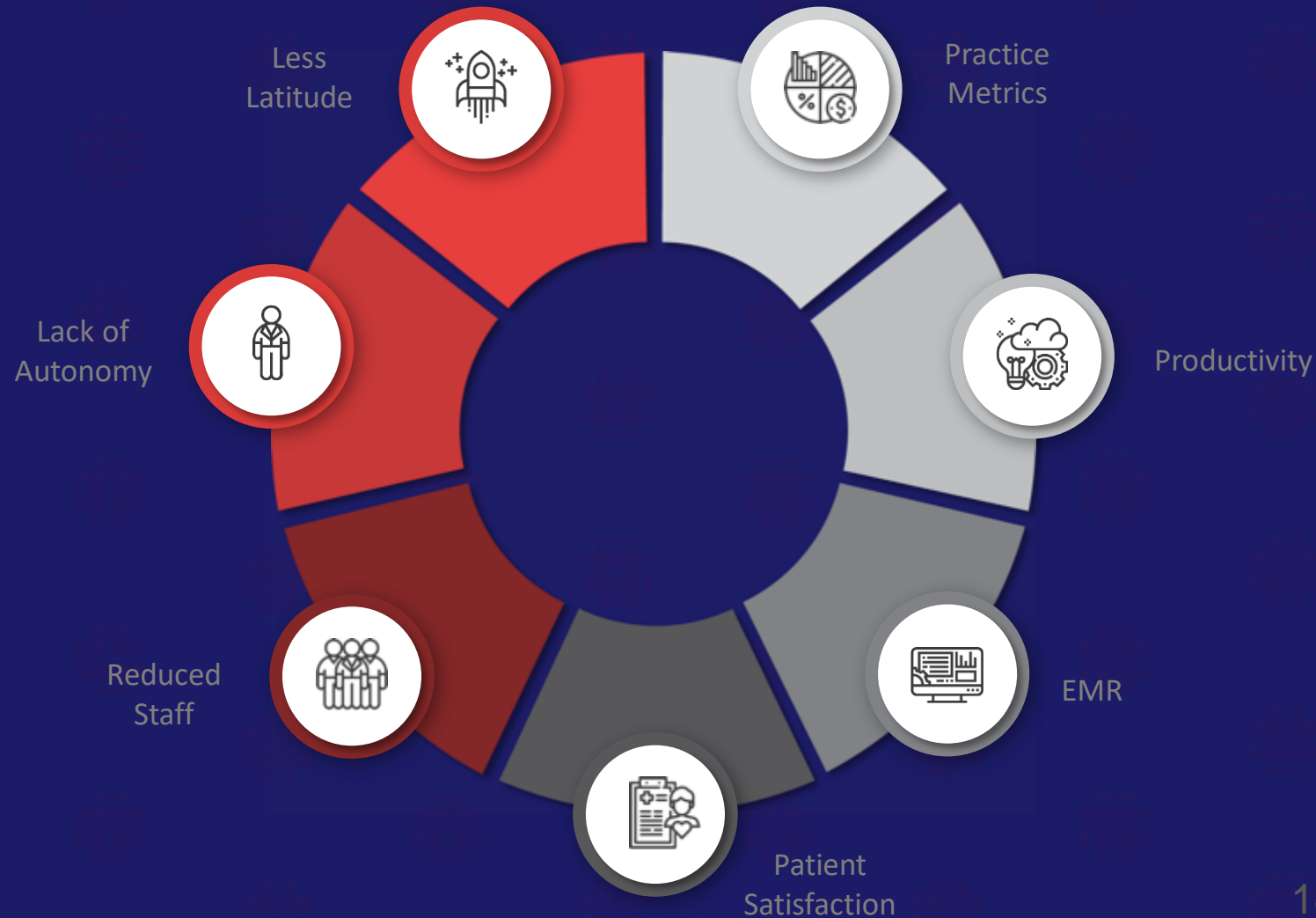
# “USUAL” BURDENS





# + PANDEMIC BURDENS

Staff Shortages



PPE

Grief

Abuse

## **PHYSICIANS ARE RESILIENT**

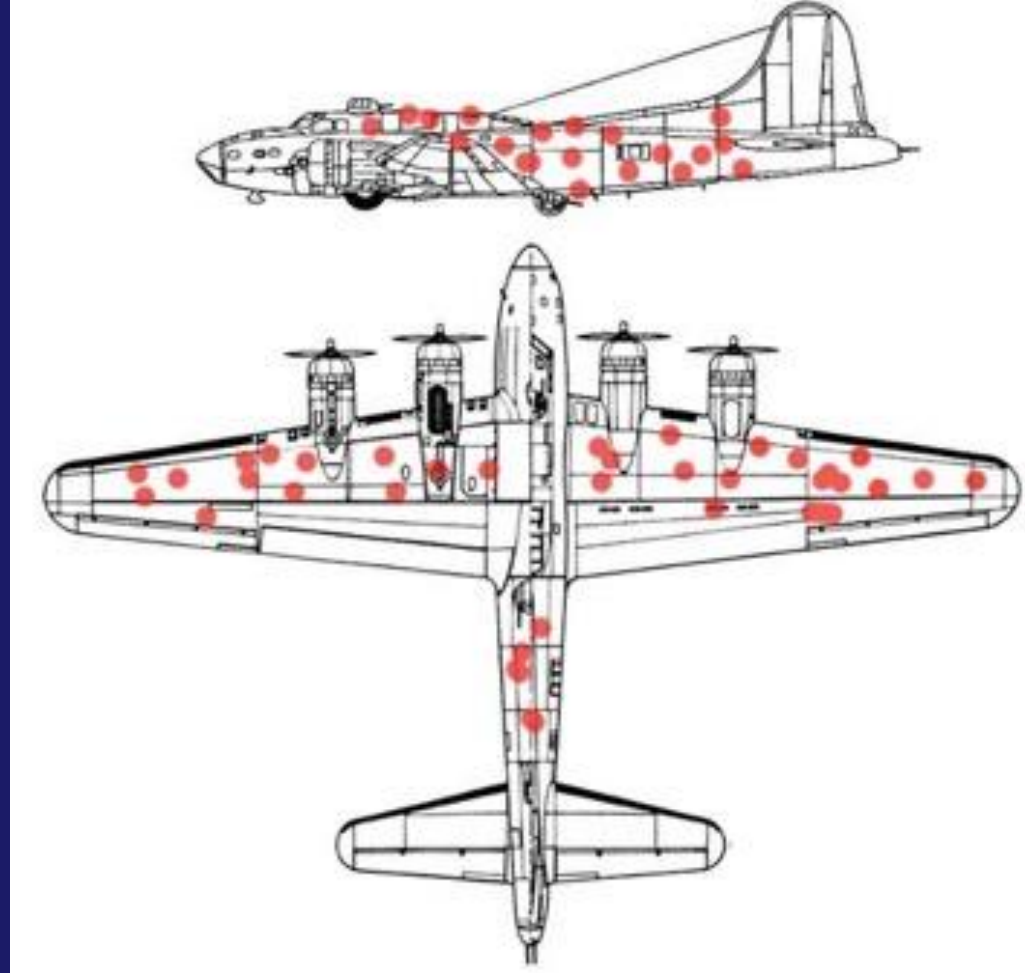
... physicians had  
*significantly higher  
resilience scores* than the  
general employed US  
population

West, JAMA, July 2020

A person wearing a white full-body protective suit, a hood, and a respirator mask with two circular filters is sitting in a meditative lotus position with their eyes closed and hands in a mudra. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

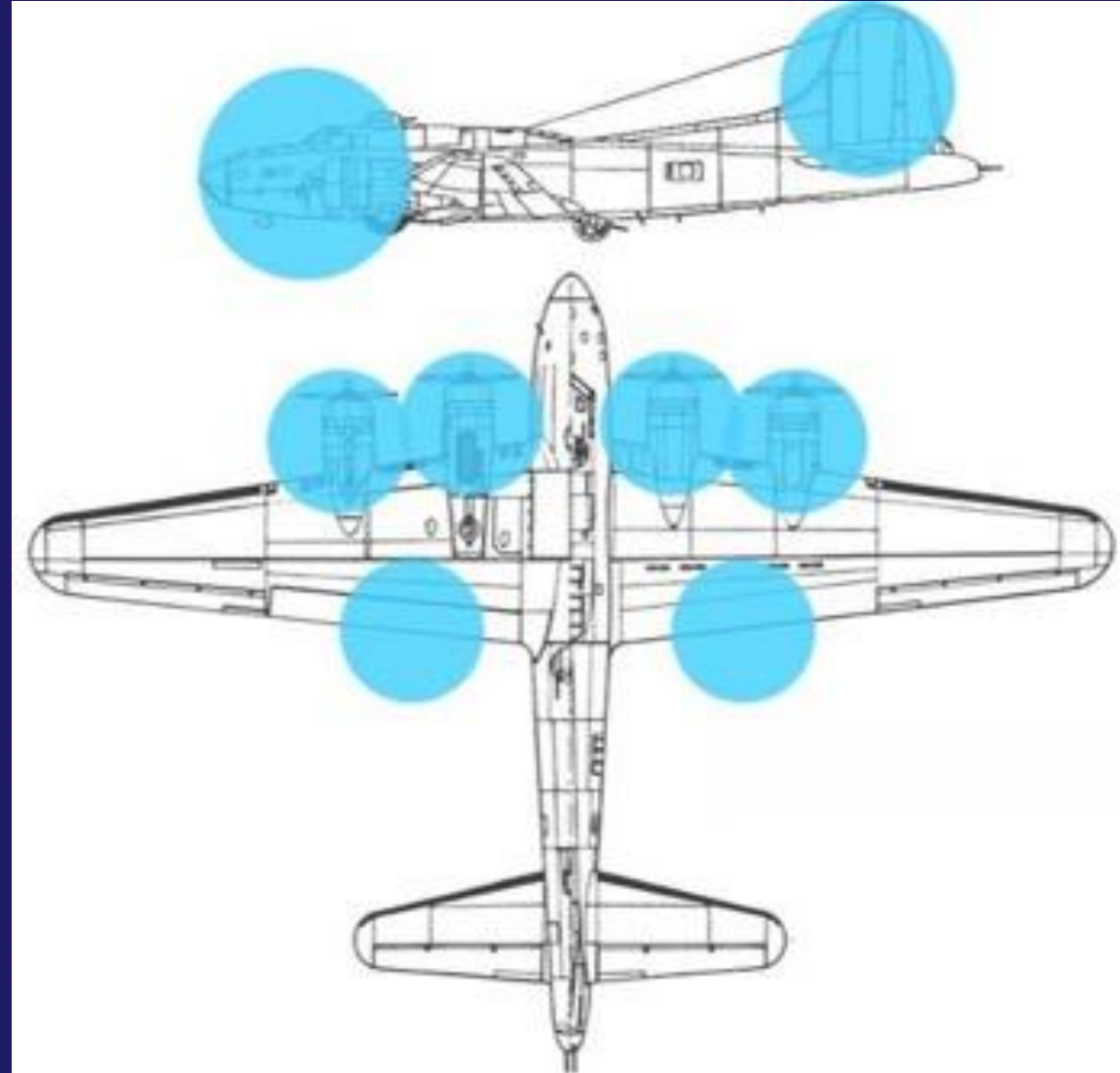
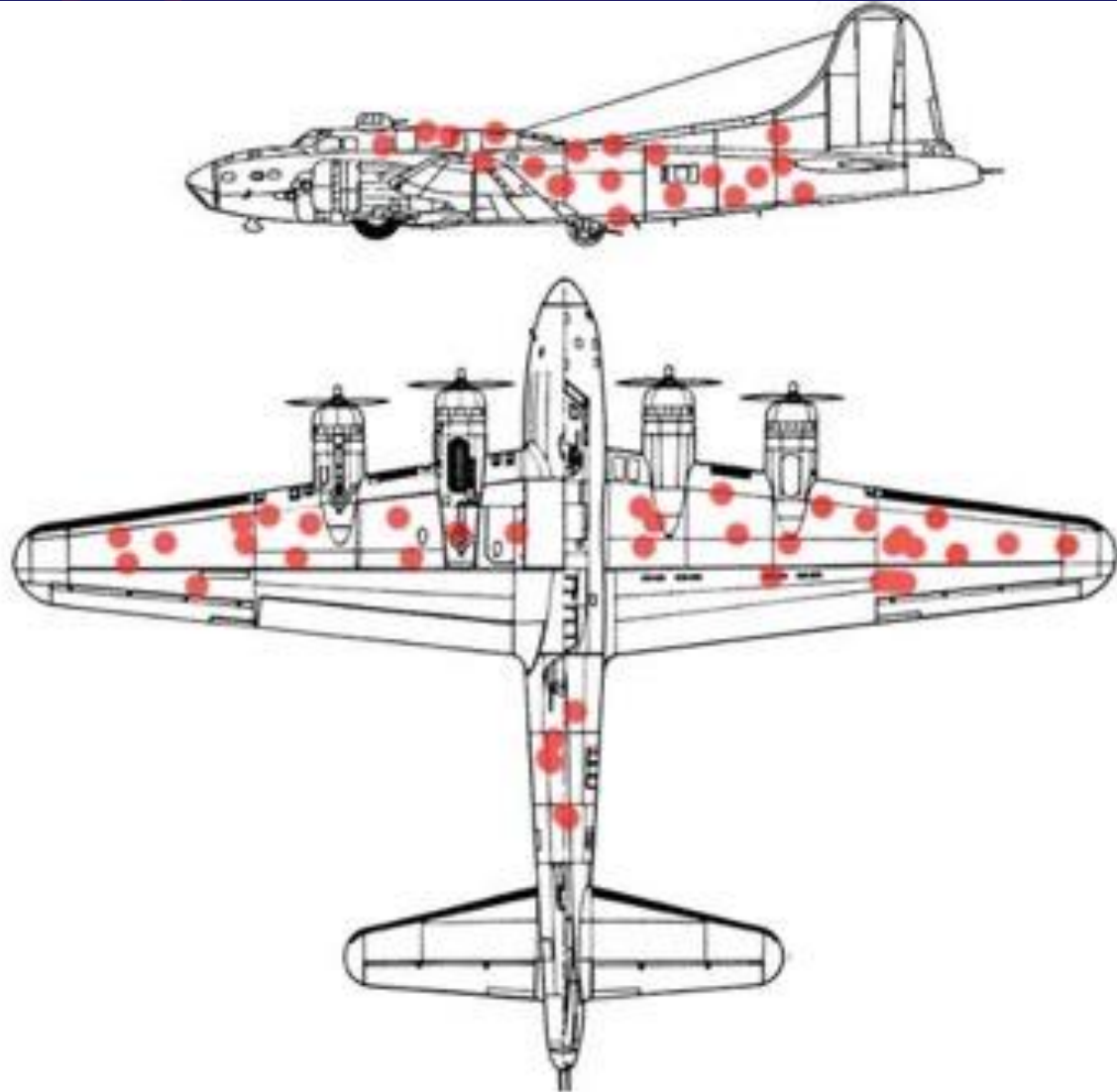
**RECOMMENDATIONS?**

# REFRAMING THE PROBLEM



Wald, Abraham. *A Method of Estimating Plane Vulnerability Based on Damage of Survivors*. Statistical Research Group, Columbia University. 1943

# REFRAMING THE PROBLEM





The background of the slide is a photograph of a person wearing a surgical mask and cap, looking down. In the background, a microscope is visible on a stand. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. A repeating pattern of small, light-colored geometric shapes is visible across the background.

# NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

October 2019—Taking Action Against Clinician Burnout: A Systems Approach to Professional Well-Being

“The evidence for system interventions that significantly address clinician burnout is limited. . .  
The study committee was not able to provide specific recommendations for systems interventions.”



## TAKE AWAY

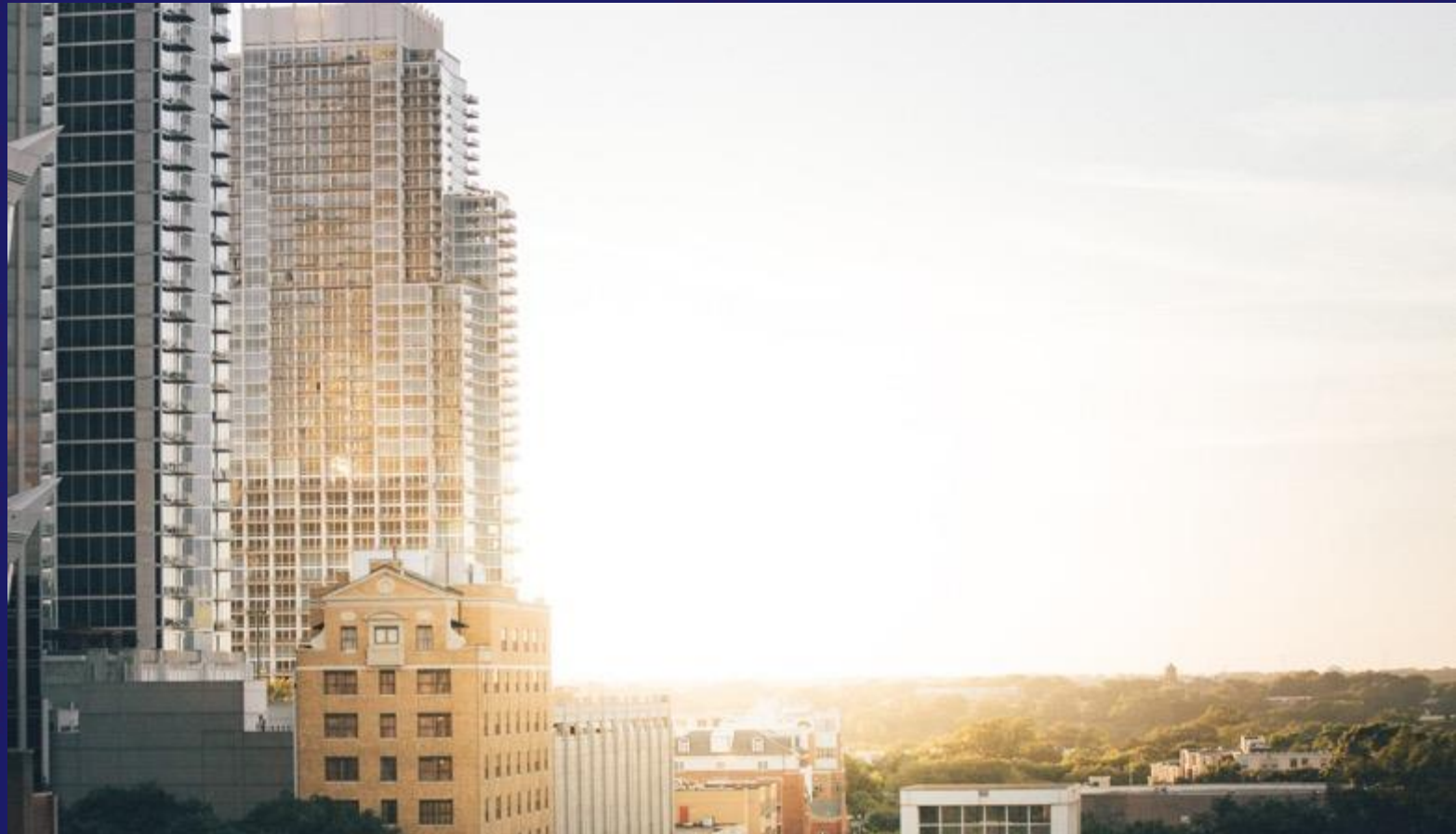
Individuals, too often, are held responsible for mitigating the dysfunction of the system

# WHERE TO INTERVENE

C-suite

Connectors

Coalface



Organizational / Individual

Societal



