

HKS and the Emergency Medicine Foundation Partner to Examine How Emergency Department Design Enhancements May Reduce Stress Factors and Burnout for Physicians

EMF Research grant awarded to the Health Design Lab at Thomas Jefferson University

DALLAS – Dec. 9, 2021 – HKS, a recognized leader in health care design, and the Emergency Medicine Foundation (EMF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), today announced a research grant focused on reducing physician burnout. The goal of the grant is to help reimagine how emergency departments are designed by fostering innovation in an environment that has remained largely unchanged for decades. The lead investigators for the research project will be Jason Matthew Fields, MD, associate professor of emergency medicine and research director for the Health Design Lab at Thomas Jefferson University and Alan Price, director of the Center for Immersive Media at University of the Arts.

For the past several years, ACEP has placed a special emphasis on the issue of physician burnout due to the extremely stressful work environment, unique patient populations, and 24/7 operations of emergency departments. These factors have been exacerbated due to Covid-19. According to a recent poll from ACEP, 72 percent of emergency physicians report experiencing greater professional burnout since the pandemic began.

“Staff burnout is a significant issue across the health care system. Design can help mitigate stressful conditions and support staff wellbeing, which is critically important,” said Jason Schroer, AIA, principal and health practice leader at HKS. “We are honored to partner with EMF to research design’s potential to ameliorate caregiver burnout.”

“EMF funded research has been defining emergency medicine practice for almost 50 years and continues to refine our practice today,” said David E. Wilcox, MD, FACEP, Chair, EMF Board of Trustees. We are pleased to collaborate with our colleagues at HKS to further enhance our understanding, improve our emergency medicine work environment and benefit our emergency department patients.”

To date, most strategies aiming to prevent physician burnout have largely focused on individual and organizational interventions. However, there is a need for greater evidence demonstrating how the physical design of the emergency department can alleviate instances of physician burnout. From numerous grant submissions, the proposal by the Health Design Lab at Thomas Jefferson University edged out the competition with a proposal that intends to provide a clearer understanding of the multiple factors creating stress while also providing tools and processes for redesigning existing emergency department spaces. The work of the project team has the potential to reduce stress for emergency physicians while creating an environment of wellness in the emergency departments they serve in, which in turn supports enhanced patient care and treatment.

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About HKS

HKS is a global firm of architects, designers, advisors and makers driven by curiosity and devoted to creating places that combine beauty with performance. Our 1,350 people in 23 locations are united by our shared culture and sense of purpose. We value honesty, diversity and inclusion and we celebrate creative thinking across our firm. In partnership with each other, our clients and our partners, we craft powerful ideas and solutions. Together we create places that stand apart.

About the Emergency Medicine Foundation

The Emergency Medicine Foundation (EMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1972 by visionary leaders of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP). EMF supports scientifically rigorous research and education that improves the care of the acutely ill and injured. To date, EMF has awarded more than \$17 million in research grants to advance emergency medicine science and health policy. For more information visit <http://www.emfoundation.org>. Companies or individuals interested in contributing to support emergency medicine research can contact Peggy Brock, EMF Executive Director, at pbrock@acep.org.

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) is the national medical society representing emergency medicine. Through continuing education, research, public education and advocacy, ACEP advances emergency care on behalf of its 39,000 emergency physician members, and the more than 150 million Americans they treat on an annual basis. For more information, visit <http://www.acep.org> and <http://www.emergencyphysicians.org>.

About the Health Design Lab at Thomas Jefferson University

The Health Design Lab at Thomas Jefferson University brings together people from different backgrounds to promote inclusive human-centered design in healthcare. Through co-design, empathy building, ideation and prototyping the lab seeks to accelerate change and improve lives.

About the Center for Immersive Media at University of the Arts

Opened in 2019, the Center for Immersive Media is 5,600-square-foot facility dedicated to exploring the fields of virtual and mixed reality, performance motion-capture, and human-computer interaction through collaboration across visual and performing arts disciplines. The mission of the center is to connect, engage and be a catalyst for creativity.