

Consent to the Confidential 2024 Clinician Vitality Survey

Introduction

BMC is partnering with Healthcare Professional Well-being Academic Consortium (PWAC) and an independent survey administrator for this survey. We are all committed to protecting the confidentiality and security of all the information you provide via this survey. If you have any questions about how we protect your privacy, please email Susannah Rowe, Susannah.Rowe@bmc.org.

More Information

If you wish to learn more about the survey, please see below:

- A) **How we protect your data:** We only share fully de-identified results, such that none of your information (gender, race/ethnicity, specialty, etc.) can ever be combined to identify you. See section A below for more information about how we protect your data and your rights as a survey respondent.
- B) **How we make effective use of your data:** We now have a full-time data analyst to help us to de-identify, analyze and share our survey data in ways that can inform and inspire change. See section B below for more information on how we use your data.
- C) **Changes this year in the way your data is stored:** To support our more robust data analysis plan, we will be moving our de-identified data to a secure OneDrive location at BMC under IRB oversight. **We want to call your attention to this change because we want to ensure you make the best choice for you about how you prefer to participate going forward.** See section C below for more information.

A. How we protect your data

Third-party vendor: We use a third-party vendor, and no one at BMC – including the EVI team – will have access to identified survey data. As in past years, your personally identifiable data is accessible only to our third-party vendor SullivanLuallin Group (SLG). SLG will conduct the survey through ServiceSTAT, a proprietary online survey administration, database and reporting tool. The ServiceSTAT survey tool is a cloud-based tool for creating and administering online surveys. The database will be stored using the resources of Microsoft's Azure on a password-protected, encrypted computer system that has limited access and is in a locked office in a controlled facility. At SLG your personally identifiable data associated with the BMC Clinician Vitality Survey is accessible only to limited personnel appointed to manage the data and the IT personnel who maintain the data.

De-identification process: Per our BU IRB agreement, SLG removes all direct identifiers such as name and email address, and substitutes anonymous participant ID numbers before sending us our dataset. Data released by EVI requires approval of the EVI data analysis team to ensure that it meets IRB criteria for de-identification, including removal of any potentially identifying

information **including any combination of demographic, department, or academic rank information that might possibly track to any group of fewer than five individuals.**

However, as many of you have noted, even with a de-identified dataset, and even though we have committed not to do this, the demographic information we collect could still theoretically be combined and used to track responses back to you. Some of the practices we have put in place to protect your personal information are detailed below.

Who sees your data at BMC: The EVI data analysis team has access to only the survey responses without direct identifiers attached, and will make no attempt to link your answers to your identity. The EVI data analysis team is able to view a BMC demographic table which contains demographics such as age, Department/Division, length of service and degree. Where demographic variables such as gender, demographics, clinician type and specialty are reported or shared outside the data analysis group, data will be scrubbed such that inadvertent identification is extremely unlikely. Specifically, care will be taken to share only data from groups of five or more, such that these variables cannot be combined in any way to identify individuals or tie their identity to their responses.

Longitudinal linkage from past years: SLG uses participant ID numbers to allow for longitudinal tracking of responses while protecting confidentiality. If you wish to decline this, you can still take the survey and SLG will assign a new participant ID number to your responses. Similarly, if on prior surveys you allowed the 3rd party administrator to connect your responses longitudinally through an anonymous participant ID number, your data will have been linked via the same participant ID number. If you took the survey but elected to not allow longitudinal linking of your data, your responses were assigned different participant ID numbers for each year and therefore cannot be connected longitudinally.

Limitations to use of the data: If another group at BMC would like data for research purposes, they will need IRB approval, as well as permission from the Equity, Vitality, and Inclusion team. Any approved research entailing linkage of survey data with other data will require use of an honest broker system to ensure that no one at BMC has access to survey responses linked to direct identifiers. Absent IRB approval, any data released requires approval of the EVI data analysis team and verification that it has been thoroughly de-identified including removal of any personal identifying information including combinations of demographic, department, or academic rank information that are unique to any group of fewer than five individuals.

Abiding by our promise from previous years: The BMC team will continue to use our third-party vendor to collect and deidentify the survey responses. In accordance with prior privacy statements, at no time will anyone at BMC have access to a dataset containing both your identifiers and your responses. Data will not be shared in a way that can be linked back to you. In particular, we will not share any data from demographic groups of fewer than five people. While the location of the data storage has changed, we abide by all previous statements to protect your privacy.

Risks: In theory, demographic data could be combined in such a way as to potentially identify a respondent. However, protecting privacy and confidentiality is our first and most important priority. We take extreme care to prevent sharing of any data that could identify individual or members of any group with less than five people. In seven years and across five surveys, we are aware of no instance where this has happened.

Periodic updates: This privacy statement will be updated periodically to reflect any material changes to our privacy policy.

Respondents' rights

This survey is voluntary: Choosing to complete any part of this survey is completely voluntary. Neither the decision to participate or decline the survey, nor any specific responses to the survey can be used or released for any employment decisions. BMC does not have access to survey responses linked to respondent identity. Use of demographic data to link data to participant responses by any person at BMC is expressly forbidden.

Protecting your privacy: BMC, BUMG, BU and all related entities will adhere to applicable IRB guidelines as well as the laws and policies in place to protect the confidentiality of your personal information.

Accessing, Changing, or Deleting Your Information: If you wish to have your data changed or removed from the database, please email Susannah at Susannah.Rowe@bmc.org with the email address from your survey. As per above, our survey vendor SLG can use your email address to link your online survey responses across time within their database, but only if you agree to this.

Skipping questions: You can skip any specific questions you feel uncomfortable answering. Please note that even if you have not clicked "submit" by the end of the survey administration period, your partially completed survey will still be recorded and counted.

Accessing more information: Please email questions or concerns about the survey to Susannah Rowe (Susannah.Rowe@bmc.org). Trainees can also email questions to Jeff Schneider (Jeffrey.Schneider@bmc.org).

B. How we make effective use of your data

In order to make effective use of the data you have shared, we now have a full-time data analyst to help us to de-identify, analyze and share our survey data in ways that can inform and inspire change. Your survey responses will be used for:

- A) **Informing action at BMC:** Your information will be used primarily for the purpose of helping BMC prioritize data-driven actions to improve clinician well-being and to suggest recommendations for future clinician well-being promotion programming and benefits design within BMC.
- B) **Obtaining funding:** We may use survey data to apply for, and/or justify, funding for programs that will help promote well-being among clinicians and their families.
- C) **Research:** Survey data may be used for IRB-approved research analyses to identify drivers and predictors of occupational well-being, explore risks for different groups, and compare these risks and wellness variables with national data; to evaluate whether other available metrics, such as Epic usage, can provide a surrogate measure of burnout; and to investigate the relationship among variables of clinicians' work/life wellness with measures such as lifestyle behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, mental and physical well-being, and quality of care metrics. When used for research purposes, your survey data will be combined with the data of other respondents, as well as potentially data collected

from other sources, and subjected to aggregate data analysis. No personally identifying information will be included in such reports.

- D) **Collaboration:** De-identified survey data will also be shared with PWAC, to which BMC and other academic medical centers belong, for purposes of well-being benchmarking and program evaluation, and potentially for research and publication purposes.

C. Changes this year in the way your data is stored

Prior offsite data analysis: In an abundance of caution, in past years we have stored and analyzed our de-identified dataset offsite at the Boston University School of Public Health Biostatistics and Epidemiology Data Analytics Center (BEDAC). BEDAC has performed analyses of the de-identified dataset under our direction using privacy standards spelled out in our BU IRB. These standards include removing all results from any demographic group with fewer than five respondents.

New full-time data analyst and new location for housing data: While working with an off-site data analyst generated accurate results, we have found that this process is both costly and time-consuming, and has substantially limited our ability to abstract and share data more broadly in ways that can be useful to effect change. Therefore, in 2023 we hired a full-time data analyst and made the decision that for 2024, we will house the deidentified survey data securely at BMC on OneDrive where our in-house data analyst can access it. The data analysis will be performed using the same privacy protections and de-identification standards as always. In particular, we will never share or report data for any group of less than five people. **We want to call your attention to this change because we want to ensure you make the best choice for you about how you prefer to participate going forward.**

What this means for you: If you take the survey this year, your deidentified responses will be housed securely at BMC. The deidentification system will remain the same: before sending us your data, our third-party vendor SLG will remove all identifiers and assign an anonymous participant ID number to your responses. If you took the survey in previous years, your deidentified data will now be housed securely at BMC. Regardless, at no time will anyone at BMC have access to a dataset containing both your identifiers and your responses. While the location of the data storage has changed, we abide by all previous statements to protect your privacy.