

# Investigating Wellness and Burnout Initiatives for Medical Trainees

## The Gratitude Journal Mobile Application

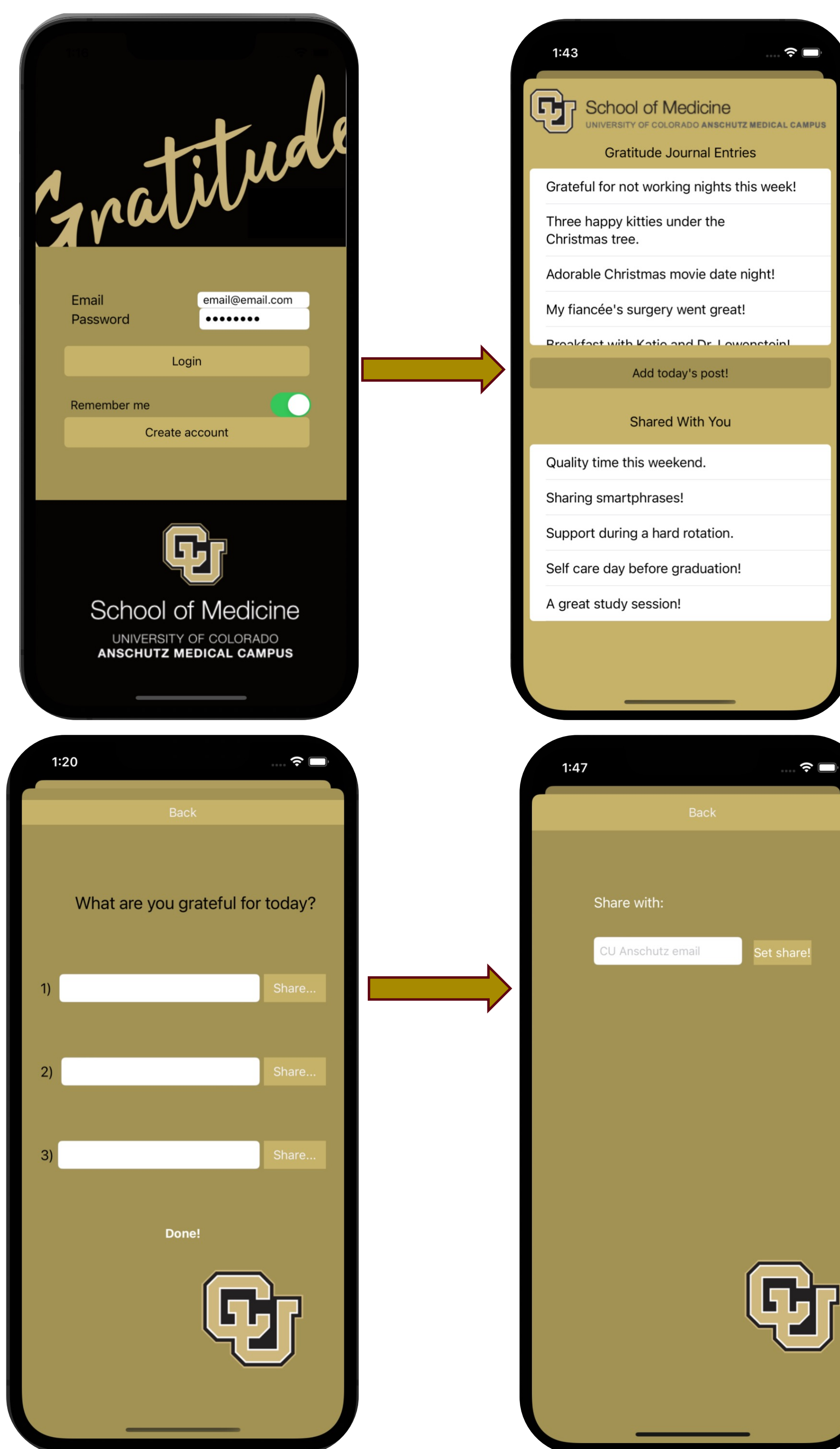
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### BACKGROUND

- Burnout is a triad of high emotional exhaustion, low personal accomplishment, and high depersonalization.
- It is the result of chronic interpersonal & environmental stressors that lead to impaired professional development, indifference, and carelessness.
- Burnout is a pressing concern, as physicians have a higher suicide rate than the general public; 300 to 400 physicians commit suicide annually.
- The 2 leading causes of death among residents are neoplasm and suicide.
- The most successful interventions are those which are organization-directed (workload requirements, environmental stressors), however, physician- and trainee- targeted interventions led by colleagues do still produce significant effects in reducing burnout.

### VISION FOR THE APP

- We set out to develop a novel smartphone app centered on cultivating point-of-care gratitude practice and community building.
- Easily accessible & applicable to all resident physicians: the night-shift resident on a break at 2AM, the early morning parent tending to children before the OR at 5AM, the weekend traveler on a flight out of town, and the day-shift resident on a lunch break.
- Concept first introduced to incoming CU medical students with hard-copy gratitude journals in 2019.



### WHY GRATITUDE?

- In 2013, psychologists Robert Emmons and Robin Stern from the University of California-Davis published “Gratitude as a Psychotherapeutic Intervention,” stating that *“gratitude has one of the strongest links to mental health and satisfaction with life of any personality trait—more so than even optimism, hope, or compassion.”*
- Emmons and Stern reported that those who practice gratitude are more effective in coping with stress and demonstrate increased resilience in the face of trauma-induced stress. *“persons who are randomly assigned to keep gratitude journals on a weekly basis exercise more regularly, report fewer physical symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole, and are more optimistic about the upcoming week, compared to those who record hassles or neutral life events.”*

### NEXT STEPS

- Build out community message board space for specific departments.
- Establish a small group of users for initial testing and feedback of the app.
- Multi-institutional RCTs among varying resident cohorts and specialties, in addition to investigations of its efficacy for medical students, trainees, faculty, APPs, nursing team members, and others.

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