

COMPASSION FATIGUE

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Abstract

A literature review was conducted between the months of August 2018 and November 2018 to determine supportive measures that can be used to decrease the incidence of compassion fatigue in acute care rural nurses. Twelve articles were reviewed focusing on supportive measures to decrease compassion fatigue and measures to increase compassion satisfaction. The purpose of this literature review was to propose measures for Spencer Hospital in Spencer, Iowa to implement in order to protect their nurses from compassion fatigue, as well as to raise awareness of compassion fatigue among the nurses. Results showed that supportive measures, such as meaningful recognition and opportunities to debrief and promotion of self-care activities, are protective factors against compassion fatigue and aid in the promotion of compassion satisfaction.

Keywords: compassion fatigue, support measures, meaningful recognition, compassion satisfaction, acute care, rural nurses

Clinical Question

In rural acute care nurses, how do support measures compared to non support measures affect compassion fatigue?

Definitions

- **Burnout:** A syndrome that develops in relation to the workplace rather than an individual associated with imbalanced resources and demand (Running on Empty, 2017),
- **Compassion Fatigue:** The result of repeated exposure to difficult situations, having physical, emotional, and spiritual effects that leave a person unable to care, empathize, and show compassion to others (Running on Empty, 2017),
- **Compassion satisfaction:** The positive feelings and motivations that one gains from caregiving and the desire to provide compassionate care to those in need (Sacco, Copel, 2017),
- **Evidence-based practice:** "The use of the best scientific evidence, integrated with clinical experience and incorporating patient values and preferences in the practice of professional nursing care" (Houser, 2018, p. 481).

Methods

The search yielded twenty-six articles in CINAHL. Fourteen articles were discarded from CINAHL because they were not relevant to the project or did not provide enough detailed data on the topic. Twelve were pertinent based on the research and are included in the literature review. These articles met the inclusion criteria of focusing on the use of supportive and self-care measures to decrease compassion fatigue as well as measures to promote compassion satisfaction.

Caring for Yourself

If nurses are experiencing deficits in self-care it prevents them from caring for other people in the best way they can (O'Connor, 2002).

Rest	Poor staffing
Relaxation	Increased workloads
Social support	High acuity
Exercise	Patient death
Transformative leadership	Unexpected patient outcomes
Meaningful recognition	Lack of leader support
Nurse engagement	

Results

The overall results from this literature review show supportive measures, such as meaningful recognition, opportunities to debrief, and promotion of self-care activities are significant factors that protect nurses against compassion fatigue and burnout. This in turn aids in the promotion of compassion satisfaction, job satisfaction, and patient care satisfaction. Through the promotion of supportive measures by the healthcare facilities, job retention is increased, decreasing the cost it takes to train new employees.

Conclusion

Compassion fatigue can affect any nurse, and is not an indication of poor nursing skill. While it can affect any nurse, compassion fatigue is preventable and the actions taken to prevent compassion fatigue can aid in the promotion of compassion satisfaction. Remembering and implementing self-care measures is one main way to prevent compassion fatigue. Taking advantage of support measures such as debriefing opportunities and counseling services is another way to address the emotional exhaustion that can result from traumatic nursing situations. Promoting compassion satisfaction, and preventing compassion fatigue, will contribute to safer patient care and be a preventative factor to the potential high turnover rates.

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