



# Combating Compassion Fatigue Among Emergency Department Nurses

Brittany Shughart, Taylor Tallman, Katrina Gaar, Michele Zampella, Stephen Sell  
University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center



## PICO

Is compassion fatigue less prevalent in emergency department nurses who participate in self-care/wellness activities than those who did not participate?

P - Emergency dept. nurses  
I - Wellness activities, self-care  
C - No wellness activities, no self-care  
O - Reduced compassion fatigue

## Abstract

Many nurses enter the nursing profession with the passion to care for others and the desire to provide compassionate care for all their patients. The stress of caring for patients and addressing their multifaceted needs can result in compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue impacts the nurses' ability to effectively care for patients, decreases job satisfaction, negatively influences workplace morale, and leads to increased turnover rates. Emergency department nurses are at an increased risk for developing compassion fatigue due to the short duration of time spent with patients, high acuity and traumatic cases they encounter. Having the ability to prevent and recognize signs of compassion fatigue, in others and in oneself, is paramount in maintaining the ability to provide empathetic, compassionate patient care..

## Human Caring Theory

### Practicing loving-kindness and equanimity within context of caring consciousness

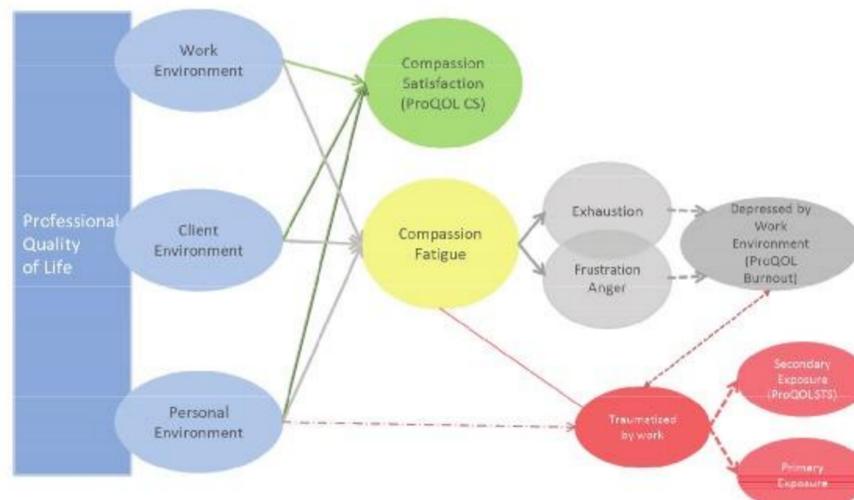
- ❖ Promoting a non-judgmental outlook, the nurse can put aside his/her own biases and see the person behind the illness or injury
- ❖ Displaying respect promotes therapeutic communication and trust, which may facilitate long-term healing (Sitzman, K., Watson, J., 2014).

### Cultivation of sensitivity to oneself and others

- ❖ Implementing the practices self-reflection through journaling, prayer, meditation, etc. the nurse displays a willingness to explore and understand their beliefs, emotions, morals and values.
- ❖ Provides healthy outlets for stress relief and overall wellbeing

## Literature Review

### Assessment Tool: Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)



- ❖ The prevalence of moderate to high CF in the emergency department is approximately 86%, and moderate to high burnout around 82% (Hooper et al., 2010).
- ❖ Results show that community nurses who score high on measures of self-compassion and wellbeing, also report less burnout. Greater compassion satisfaction was also positively associated with compassion for others, and wellbeing, whilst also being negatively correlated with burnout (Durkin et al., 2016).
- ❖ The results revealed overall low to average levels of compassion fatigue and burnout and generally average to high levels of compassion satisfaction among this group of emergency department nurses. The low level of manager support was a significant predictor of higher levels of burnout and compassion fatigue among emergency department nurses, while a high level of manager support contributed to a higher level of compassion satisfaction (Hunsaker, Chen, & Heaston, 2015).

## Recommendations

### Self-care Practices

- ❖ Hospital provided self-care programs would address the lack of education surrounding CF and give staff members an additional resource to build resilience.
- ❖ This program could be offered as part of new grad residency program to promote retention, as well as offered to current nurses who feel they could benefit or are identified by leadership.

### Nursing Leadership Support

- ❖ Nursing leadership needs to be a source of empowerment. Nursing leaders
- ❖ Need to be well versed in the types of stressful situations their nurses encounter
- ❖ Alleviate unnecessary stressors such as understaffing and broken equipment.
- ❖ Be aware of nurses who demonstrate signs of CF and intervene appropriately, in a non-judgmental fashion.

### Identification of Compassion Fatigue

- ❖ Utilizing the Pro-QOL5 to measure the level of compassion fatigue a staff member is exhibiting.
- ❖ Hospital or individual can administer the Pro-QOL5 at any stage of employment, i.e. preemployment screening, new grad residency program, educational program for current employees, or for current employee to reflect on their current practice.

