

Caring for the Caregiver: Challenges and Opportunities in the Professional Experience

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1

Central Message

The cost of working with those who suffer has a
ripple effect within us, among us, and around
us

2

Learning Objectives

1. Learning about the Centre for Practitioner Renewal
2. Review of stress and the healthcare work environment
3. Overview of burnout and vicarious trauma
4. What we hear at CPR
5. Repair/Resilience

3

Learning Objective #1

- Learning about the Centre for Practitioner Renewal (CPR)

www.practitionerrenewal.ca

4

CPR Mission

Strive to sustain healthcare providers in the workplace

Explore the effects of being in the presence of suffering

5

CPR

- Research
- Service
- Education

6

Learning Objective # 2

- Review of stress and the healthcare work environment

7

Prevalence of Mental Illness and Psychological Distress

- Leading cause of disability costs in Canada - stress, burnout, depression
- Number of workdays lost to mental health conditions = 35 million annually
- 13.1 sick days per year vs. 7.8 for all workers
- 66% of new nurses (<2 years) experience burnout
- Illness & disability within HC in ON & BC cost approximately 1 billion dollars annually

8

Mental Health & Psychological Well Being in Health Care

Nurses:

- 2002 - rate of absenteeism and work loss (due to illness, injury, burnout & disability) among Canadian nurses was almost double that of the general labour force
- CLBC estimated that over the course of a year 16 million nursing hours are lost to injury & illness (= 9,000 FT positions)

9

Mental Health & Psychological Well Being in Health Care

Physicians:

Significantly higher levels of burnout than the general population - 46% of respondents to the CMA 2003 physician resource questionnaire reported experiencing an advanced stage of burnout

Burnout linked to:

- Lost productivity, depression, addictions
- Higher rates of suicide
- Distress in physicians' family lives
- Sub-optimal medical care & increased patient suffering

10

Challenges to Well Being in Health Care

“High demand/low control is bad enough; High demand/low control/low support can be deadly”

Sotile W.M. And Sotile, M.O. (2002) The Resilient Physician.

11

Learning Objective # 3

Overview of:

- Burnout
- Vicarious Trauma

12

Burnout

A state of mental and/or physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress

Two major causes are:

1. Bureaucratic atmospheres
2. Overwork

13

Burnout

“...A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion resulting from intense involvement with people over long periods of time in situations that are emotionally demanding...burnout tends to be job related and situation specific rather than pervasive.”

(Sotile & Sotile, 2002)

14

Burnout Effects

- Emotional Exhaustion
- De-personalization
 - Negative attitude (patients/colleagues/self)
 - Personal detachment
 - Loss of ideals/cynicism
- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment at work (Maslach, 1993)

15

STS, CF, VT

- Secondary Traumatic Stress (Stamm, 1995)
- Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995)
- Vicarious Traumatization (McCann & Pearlman, 1990)

16

Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue is the emotional residue of exposure to working with the suffering
- Absorbing the trauma through the eyes and ears of your patients/colleagues

17

Compassion Fatigue

- Professionals listening to stories of fear, pain and suffering of others may feel similar fear, pain and suffering because they care
- State of tension and preoccupation with an individual or cumulative trauma of patients

18

Compassion Fatigue

“The natural consequent behaviours and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (Figley, 1999)

19

Damage to Hope

“Vicarious traumatization also carries a social cost.... Unaddressed VT, manifests in cynicism and despair, results in a loss to society of hope and the positive actions it fuels” (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)

20

General Signs & Symptoms of VT

- Numbing, withdrawal
- Sense of hopelessness, cynicism
- No time or energy for self
- Disconnection from loved ones
- Increased sensitivity to violence
- Self-medication

21

Specific Signs & Symptoms of VT

- Disruptions in core beliefs about the world and spirituality
- Diminished self capacities (tolerance, self-worth, judgment errors)
- Impaired ego resources (meeting our needs, negotiating boundaries)
- Disrupted psychological needs (safety, trust, esteem, control, intimacy)
- Alterations in sensory experiences and perceptions (intrusive imagery, dissociation)
- Somatic/bodily experiences

22

Contributing Factors

Person:

- Personal history
- Personality/coping style
- Current life context
- Training and professional history

23

Contributing Factors

Situation:

- Patients
- Specifics of traumatic events and experiences
- Cumulative exposure
- Organizational context
- Social and cultural context

24

Vicarious Traumatic Stress

“The negative transformation in the helper that comes about as the result of incomplete empathic engagement with trauma survivors and their trauma material and a commitment or sense of responsibility to help” (Pearlman, 2004)

25

Personal Assessment

At the end of each day and that the end of your work week, how would you rate your emotional stress level? What do you notice in your body, your mind and your feelings as you leave your work?

How do you feel as you commute to work? As you commute home? When you arrive home? After an hour at home? As you fall asleep? Do you dream about your work? If so, what are the themes and imagery in these dreams?

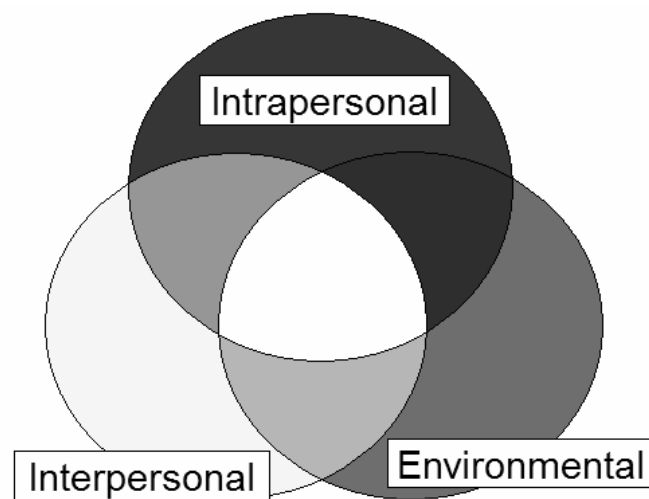
26

Learning Objective #4

- What we hear at CPR

27

Division of Concerns



28

Intrapersonal

- Obsessive perfectionism
- Fatalistic/Despondent (as opposed to agentic)
- Caring more will reduce personal/systemic troubles
- Estrangement
- I have always been a caregiver
- Hyperactivity – hypervigilance
- Presenteeism
- Grief and other unacceptable emotions

29

Interpersonal

- Caring more will show others that I'm ok
- I feel like I'm the only one with these concerns (isolation)
- Estrangement
- Team guidelines are implicit and assumed
- Grief and other unacceptable emotions

30

Environmental

- Communication
 - Intra-team/Inter-team
- I have to appear 'perfect' in front of my colleagues
- I am afraid they will gossip
- Opaque system of decision-making
- Staff attrition (succession planning)
- I can't refuse overtime
- Estrangement

31

Learning Objective #5

- Repair/Resilience

32

Self Knowledge and Connection

To understand ourselves we have to be understood by another. To understand another we have to understand ourselves (Watzlawick, Bevan & Jackson)

33

Intrapersonal

- Meaning Making (Frankl, 1959)

Those who work with suffering patients must continue to believe in new possibilities for themselves and those patients

34

Interpersonal

- Team Development (Tuckman, 1965)
 - Forming
 - Storming
 - Norming
 - Performing
 - Adjourning (Tuckman & Jensen 1977)

35

Environmental

- Group (team) principles (Yalom, 2005)
 - Instillation of hope
 - Universality
 - Cohesiveness

36

Resilience

- Resilience involves maintaining flexibility and balance in your life as you deal with stressful circumstances and traumatic events

37

Increasing Resilience (Intra/Inter/Environ)

- Self Care
 - . Taking care of your basic physical, emotional, interpersonal, intellectual and psychological needs
 - . Emphasis on limit setting, healthy habits, community
 - . Spiritual connection
- Nurturing Activities
 - . What nourishes you and builds you up
 - . Emphasis on comfort, relaxation, play, pleasure, creativity, challenge, joy
- Escape
 - . How do you get completely away from your work and experience your life as more balanced

38

Transforming Vicarious Trauma

- Think about 3 things you could do to address Vicarious Traumatization
 - Intrapersonally
 - Interpersonally
 - Environmentally

39

Transforming Vicarious Trauma

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Intrapersonal<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Vacation▪ Exercise▪ Have lunch with a close friend■ Interpersonal<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explicit team norms▪ Schedule supervision▪ Team meetings with a process focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Environmental<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Have VT discussion▪ Reading/discussion group▪ Team celebration for accomplishments |
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40

Shared Humanity

*We are strong when we stand with
another soul. When we are with
others we cannot be broken.*

Clarissa Pinkola Estes.