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Compassion fatigue and a nursing journal club: A heuristic investigation

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Background: Working day in and day out with individuals, who are in pain, creates an environment that can create compassion fatigue. These displays or secondary stressors are the resultant from the caring work that nurses do. Bottled up emotions, emotional isolation, substance use disorders, flashbacks and other negative dynamics can result from being associated with others' pain on a regular basis. Caregivers need to be educated on compassion fatigue and possible interventions that can resolve such issues. Journal clubs have been used in many areas of healthcare. Sites such as the National Institute of Health (2017) have an extensive journal club listing for healthcare professionals' consideration. It has been shown that this form of interaction supports healthcare professionals in learning new information and development of creative means of addressing commonalities in practice.

Methods: A heuristic methodology was utilized to research the impact of a journal club on nurses in a variety of practice areas. An invitation for participation was submitted to nurses who participated in a professional nursing group in Kentucky or Nevada Fall 2016 through that organization. Following an explanation of the project, a consent form was signed, and participants were admitted to a closed group on Facebook. An introductory article was submitted, and participants addressed the article with questions submitted by the group facilitators and authors of this research work. After a two week discussion of that article, the process was repeated until all three articles were read and discussed. Three articles were discussed over a six week period. Articles discussed were as follows: 1. Hunsaker S, Chen H, Maughan D and Heaston S (2015) Factors that influence the development of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in emergency department nurses. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 47(2) 186-195; 2. Lombardo B and Eyre C (2011) Compassion fatigue: A nurse's primer. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* 16(1): 3 and 3. Sheppard K (2016) Compassion fatigue: Are you at risk? *American Nurse Today* 11 (1): 53-55.

Results: Themes generated from the discussions were as follows: Stressors are faced in all areas of nursing, not just those commonly considered such as ED or CCU. Stressors are generated by workload, colleagues, self-expectations and lack of purpose. Two things that can help with compassion fatigue are safe place/safe people in our lives and self-care on a regular basis.

Conclusions: The conclusion is that the journal club provided an increased understanding among the participants. Interaction between participants were noted and synthesis of ideas and experiences were enhanced by the knowledge gleaned from the articles read. The articles provided a focus of the group and offered insights that could be addressed as a group.

Biography

Mary Biddle is an Assistant Professor in Nursing Education at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and she also works as an Adjunct Faculty Member at Touro University Nevada. Her scholarly interests include nursing education, holistic nursing, geriatrics, compassion fatigue and current issues affecting the professional nurse. Compassion fatigue in nursing was her doctoral project topic at Touro University Nevada, where she earned her DNP. Decreasing compassion fatigue is her area of interest where she is able to help the nursing profession with her contribution. In addition, she is passionate about supporting advancement in nursing education.

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