Recognise | Respond | Resilience
Managing Compassion Fatigue in Oncology Nurses

Experience on the Essentials of Care Mentorship Program

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Objectives

1. Raise awareness of the signs of compassion fatigue (CF)/secondary trauma and burnout
2. Develop strategies and access resources on managing compassion fatigue
3. How to care for ourselves and each other to enable us to reduce our risk of fatigue and burnout whilst working in an emotionally challenging environment
4. Increase the nurses' team morale, motivation, cohesiveness and resilience, reframe our CORE values into practice

Background

CF and burnout are risks associated with work as an Oncology Nurse due to the emotional and personal nature of the work we do. As part of the Essentials of Care (EOC) three month Mentorship initiative supported by the Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD), under the guidance of the EOC Coordinator, I was allocated one day per week for three months, away from clinical duties to plan and implement this key activity. The initiative incorporated mentorship and coaching and a commitment to a sense of accomplishment, collaboration and respect within the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute (MNCCI) team.

Why?

Remote nurses are a pivotal and trauma in the oncology setting we have Oncology Nurses at risk for development of CF and burnout (1, 2) due to the emotional, empathetic and intuitive nature of our work. Nurses dealing with long term (cancer) patients have been associated in research, both emotionally and intellectually, the risk of burnout rises (2). Patient numbers and acuity have increased at MNCCI with factors such as skill mix, staffing, and workload, the impact of oncology nurses' ability to manage workload stress. This coupled with exposure to pain and trauma via patient descriptions and deaths, affects both individually and collectively. To help foster a culture of support and care for both nurses and the patients we care for, we have implemented a three month Mentorship program to target and deliver CF and burnout intervention.

Outcomes

CF and burnout are difficult to measure, very subjective and influenced by many variables. A Professional Quality of Life (PQoL) Factor was conducted at the commencement of the project to gauge the feelings of the nursing team on their level of CF vs compassion satisfaction. Results showed a moderate level of satisfaction, high level of fatigue and low level of burnout. A Professional Quality of Life (PQoL) survey was conducted at the commencement of the project to gauge the feelings of the nursing team on their level of CF vs compassion satisfaction. Results showed a moderate level of satisfaction, high level of fatigue and low level of burnout. A Professional Quality of Life (PQoL) survey was conducted at the commencement of the project to gauge the feelings of the nursing team on their level of CF vs compassion satisfaction. Results showed a moderate level of satisfaction, high level of fatigue and low level of burnout.

References:

2. McDonald, G., Jackson, D., Wilkes, L., Vickers, M.H. A work based educational intervention to support the development of personal resilience (Collaborate, Overcome Adversity, Empowerment) we had documented proudly on posters in our clinical area, were not necessarily being upheld in the way we treated one another and worked as a team.
3. Why?
4. Increase the nursing team morale, motivation, cohesiveness and resilience, putting our CORE values into practice.