Compassion Fatigue in Healthcare Providers and Caregivers

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Objectives

• Define Compassion Fatigue
• Differentiate Compassion Fatigue and Burnout
• Identify risk factors for Compassion Fatigue
• How to recognize Compassion Fatigue
• Identify tips and strategies to reduce Compassion Fatigue
The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

- Naomi Rachel Remen
Statistics on Caregiving

• In 2015, Approximately 43.5 million caregivers have provided unpaid care to an adult or child

• In 2013, Economic value of care provided by informal caregivers was $470 billion
  • 65% of care recipients are female, with an average age of 69.4
  • Average age of caregiver is 49.2
  • Family caregivers spend an average of 24.4 hours/week providing care
  • Average duration of a caregivers role is 4 years
  • Vast majority of caregivers (85%) care for a relative or loved one

• Caregiving Tasks include ADLs, IADLs, nursing tasks
"Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper."

Dr. Charles Figley
Professor, Paul Henry Kurzweg Distinguished Chair
Director, Tulane Traumatology Institute
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

Jeanne Maiden further defined CF as “a state of emotional, physical, social and spiritual exhaustion leaving the individual fatigued, overwhelmed, helpless and hopeless about ones situation or life, causing a pervasive decline in the person’s desire, ability and energy to feel and care for others.”

“The emotional residue or strain of secondary traumatic stress, or exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. Results from exposure to one case or repeated exposure to a cumulative level of trauma.”
Burnout
- Not trauma related
- Reactional
- Develops from discontent with working conditions
- Detached from patient care
- Pessimism

Compassion Fatigue
- Stems from observing another's traumatic events
- Relational
- Caregiving strategies are unsuccessful
- Feelings of guilt
- Psychic exhaustion
Measuring Compassion Fatigue

Professional Quality of Life

- Compassion Satisfaction
- Compassion Fatigue
  - Burnout
  - Secondary Trauma

http://www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html
Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well.

- You may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work.
- You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society.
- If you are in the higher range (>50), you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position.
Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively.

- These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset.
- They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment.

- Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout.

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Share your results- Secondary Traumatic Stress

The second component of Compassion Fatigue (CF) is secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is about your work related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events.

• Developing problems due to exposure to other’s trauma is somewhat rare but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events.

• The symptoms of STS are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event.
Risk Factors

• **Personal attributes**
  - Overly conscientious, perfectionist, self-giving
  - Low level of social support
  - High level of stress
  - Previous histories of trauma that lead to negative coping skills

• **Organizational attributes**
  - Healthcare
    - ‘Culture of silence’ - stressful events not discussed after event
    - Between 16% and 85% of health care workers in various fields develop CF
  - Lack of awareness of symptoms
  - Poor training in the risks associated with high stress jobs
Recognizing Compassion Fatigue

**Table. Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK RELATED</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Avoidance or dread of working with certain patients</td>
<td>• Mood swings</td>
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<td>• Reduced ability to feel empathy towards patients or families</td>
<td>• Restlessness</td>
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<td>• Frequent use of sick days</td>
<td>• Irritability</td>
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<td>• Lack of joyfulness</td>
<td>• Oversensitivity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Anxiety</td>
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<td>• Excessive use of substances: nicotine, alcohol, illicit drugs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Depression</td>
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<td>• Anger and resentment</td>
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<td>• Loss of objectivity</td>
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<td>• Memory issues</td>
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<td>• Poor concentration, focus, and judgment,</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Headaches</td>
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<td>• Digestive problems: diarrhea, constipation, upset stomach</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Muscle tension</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sleep disturbances: inability to sleep, insomnia, too much sleep</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fatigue</td>
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<td>• Cardiac symptoms: chest pain/pressure, palpitations, tachycardia</td>
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Tips to Reduce and Prevent Compassion Fatigue
Practice self-reflection and mindfulness
Recharge daily
Spend meaningful time with family
• Mental Health Days
• Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
• Engage with colleagues
Make a connection through **humor** with colleagues.

“You’ll have to excuse my husband - he’s got compassion fatigue”.

CartoonStock.com
Remember your ABC's

Awareness  Balance  Connections
Questions
References


