Combining Work Life Balance with Delivery of Patient-Centered Excellence

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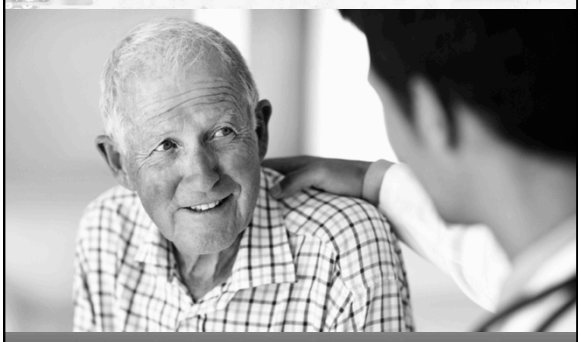
Learning Objectives

- To consider the demands of professional caregiving
- To learn about compassion fatigue, burnout, and resilience
- To develop strategies for maintaining work/life balance while providing excellent patient care

Caring professionals may be deeply challenged by their work

- You bear witness to suffering
- You are intimately touched by the experiences of those you care for
- You learn about the inescapable reality of loss
- You are confronted with existential questions of meaning



How does your work affect your worldview?

- Does it help you appreciate life?
- Does it make you fear what "might" happen?
- Does it make you less tolerant of other issues?

The Gifts…

- We see glimpses of:
  - Love and compassion
  - Faith
  - Acceptance
  - Humor
  - Wisdom
  - Courage

The privilege:

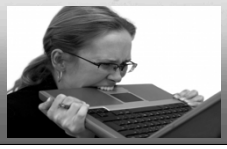
- Lessons learned often add meaning to personal and professional lives
- People with life-limiting illnesses remind us of how precious life is
- The dying teach us how to live

Still….

- Sometimes we witness things that are difficult to see.
- We must hold the "unfairness" of things that happen

We also see…..

- People who may not choose to make the changes that could contribute to better health
- The resources may not be available to help



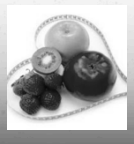
Renal Dieticians…

- Food and nephrology nutrition experts:
  - Are the premier source of nephrology nutrition
  - Optimize the health of populations served
  - Supports evidence-based nutrition guidelines to practice and education

You also…

- Work at an advanced level practice in :
  - CKD/nephrology clinics
  - Dialysis units
  - Transplant centers
  - Hospitals
  - Private practice
    - Each of these settings have similar and unique challenges

- What are the challenges you face?



The impact of continued exposure may result in:

- Compassion fatigue
- Burnout
- Vicarious traumatization
- Existential or spiritual distress

Are compassion fatigue and burnout the same thing?

- Similar, but have different qualities
- **Burnout is grounded in our reaction to the work environment**
- **Compassion fatigue is grounded in the clinical work and our reaction to it**
- With burnout the source of the stress is the system, the context in which we work and working conditions
  - Masslach, 1978, Figley, 1995

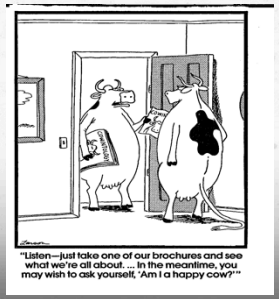
What is burnout?

- **External locus of control**
  - Insufficient resources to do the job
  - Unrealistic expectations
  - Inadequate compensation
  - Feeling overworked
  - Leads to feeling overwhelmed and loss of control
- **Characterized by:**
  - Persistent exhaustion
  - Constant frustration
  - Sense of inability to accomplish tasks
  - Source of ongoing stress

Definitions:

- Burnout:

"The progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of the conditions of their work."
  - (Freudenberger)
  - Prevalence: 30% among physicians and nurses
  - (recent estimates- burnout rates are increasing in healthcare)



Strengths

- Commitment to the work and each other
- Passion and understanding of the importance of the work
- Understanding one's community
- A "seasoned" perspective

Challenges

- Resources to do the work
- Overstressed and stretched providers
- Change/loss/turnover
- Challenges unique to your setting?

Symptoms of Burnout: individual

- Poor judgment
- Over-identification or over-involvement
- Boundary violations
- Perfectionism and rigidity
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Addictive behaviors
- Physical illness
- Questioning the meaning of life/spirituality

Symptoms of burnout: Group/Team

- Low morale
- High job turnover
- Impaired job performance (lack of empathy, increased absenteeism)
- Staff conflicts

"Burnout"

- The process in which a once committed health care professional becomes ineffective in managing the stress of frequent emotional contact with others and in the helping context experiences exhaustion: and, as a result, disengages from patients, colleagues, and the organization

Burnout: "Psychology of postponement"

- Postpone:
  - One's own needs
  - Significant relationships
  - Sources of renewal
- Until:
  - All the work is done
  - The next professional hurdle is achieved
    - M. Kearney, MD

Compassion Fatigue

- Is the natural, predictable, treatable, and preventable unwanted consequence of working with suffering people.
- Caring people sometimes experience pain as direct result of exposure to someone else's suffering
  - Prevalence: 6-8%

Compassion fatigue

- Comes from the desire to relieve another's suffering
- The source of the stress is the context of the work
- Overexposure to suffering and pain
- It can cause personal stress, erode empathy, and lead to de-sensitization

Individual risk factors

- At risk earlier in career
- Lack of life-partner
- Passive, defensive approach to stress
- Lack of involvement in daily activities
- Lack of sense of control, not open to change

Personality and spirituality

- Caregivers who value interpersonal interactions and have a great capacity to empathize tend to cope better
- Personality characteristics that view helping as a responsibility and a pleasure tend to cope better

Personality and spirituality (cont.)

- The Hardy Personality has been found to be effective in combating stress and avoiding burnout
- The Hardy Personality involves commitment, curiosity, sense of meaningfulness, control
- "hardiness" is said to lead to perception, interpretation, and handling of stressful events that prevents anxiety and stress

Challenges…..

- Communication problems with patients and families
- Patient expectations
- Identification with patients
- Dealing with chronic and/or critical illness, death, and dying

Work Environment

- Challenges inherent in the work setting:
  - Space
  - Volume
  - Expectations
  - Staffing

Work environment (cont.)

- The quality of support one receives from the people around them has an impact: colleagues, patients and families, administration.
- As it happens, most aspects of our environment can offer either support or constraints

Manifestations of Burnout?

- Physical
- Psychological
- Behavioral
- Social
- Spiritual

Existential or spiritual distress

- State of intense psychological discomfort
- Questions may arise such as:
  - Why do “good people” suffer?
  - what purpose does this serve?
  - Why am I doing this work?
  - What difference can I make?
  - What have I accomplished?

The “Helper’s Pit”

- Standing so close to the edge that the caregiver him/herself may just fall in too.
- Feeling “with” the person, vs. feeling “for” the person
  - -Dale Larson

Why do we stay?

- Why don't many of us burn out and leave the profession altogether?
- Why do we stay and reengage with the work?
- Perhaps there are things we are doing and continue to do that foster resiliency in our selves and clinical practice

"Aequanimatas"

- Is usually translated from Latin to mean "objectivity". It actually means "calmness of mind, or inner peace."

What is resiliency?

- It is the flip-side to burnout/compassion fatigue
- It is strengths based
- **Resiliency looks at what causes people to grow, expand and refocus**
- Resiliency means to bounce back

Resiliency (cont.)

- Is seen as a valuable characteristic when dealing with stressful life transitions and work
- Value lies in how we make meaning of life stressors and incorporate what we have learned into our lives

Resiliency (cont.)

- We have to experience hardship to develop resilience
- Resilience is also an integral aspect of an individual's capacity to problem-solve
- An active, vs. passive process of responding to overwhelming situations
- A resilient response is fluid, not static
- **Developing personal resilience can reduce vulnerability**

- These perspectives suggest that resiliency is not completely inherent but is learned.

Building Resilience Principles

- Connect to your purpose and meaning in life
- Use your unique strengths
- Maintain perspective
- Generate positive feelings

Building Resilience Principles

- Be reasonably optimistic
- Persevere by being open minded and flexible
- Reach out to others

The value of self-awareness

- Involves being aware and mindful
- Engaging in self-reflection of our own life
- Cultivate (GUARD!) work-life balance
- Feel renewed connection to the work

Personal revival strategies

- Recognizing your own warning signs
- What can you incorporate into your self-care strategies?
- What are you already doing?
- What do you need to add in order to cope?

Compassion Satisfaction

- Is pleasure derived from the work of helping others

Posttraumatic Growth and Vicarious P-T Growth

- Posttraumatic growth is characterized by positive changes in interpersonal relationships, sense of self, and philosophy of life subsequent to direct experience of a traumatic event that shakes the foundation of an individual's worldview.

Factors Mitigating Compassion Fatigue

- Exquisite Empathy: defined as "*highly present, sensitively attuned, well-boundaried, heartfelt empathic engagement"*
- The practitioners using "exquisite empathy" were invigorated rather than depleted by their intimate professional connections with traumatized clients, and protected against compassion fatigue and burnout.

"Exquisite Empathy" (cont.)

- Includes Bi-directionality
- At its foundation is clinician self-awareness

CPR for the Professional

- Successful coping is based on:
  - Being proactive
  - Taking charge
  - Setting limits
  - Compartmentalizing
  - Teamwork

SWOT Analysis How is your program doing?

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Finding meaning- both individually and collectively

- Why did you choose this work?
- Why have you stayed?
- What makes it meaningful?
- How will that meaning sustain you over time?

Measures that May Help Prevent Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

- Mindful meditation
- Reflective writing
- Adequate supervision and mentoring
- Sustainable workload
- Promotion of feelings of choice and control
- Appropriate recognition and reward

Measures, cont.

- Supportive work community
- Promotion of fairness and justice in the workplace
- Training in communication skills
- Development of self-awareness
- Practice self-care activities
- Continuing education
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction for team
- Meaning-centered interventions for team
  - Kearney, Weiinger, Vachon, Harrison, Mount-2009

Thank you for all you do.