



## Caregiver Stress & Compassion Fatigue

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Joy Whitlatch, EdD, MSN, RN  
Associate Professor, RN to BSN Option  
Chamberlain University College of Nursing

Virginia Hall, DNP, RN, CNE  
Professor, RN to BSN Option  
Chamberlain University College of Nursing

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## Introduction

- Our population is living longer and requires more involved care
- Caregivers need lessons on self-care and how to care for themselves

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Patients that are living longer with many complex diseases, are resulting in the need for complex care.

The future trends living longer and increasing rates of dementia and chronic conditions due to medical advancements result in a need more provision of care for older adults.

Increased expense attached to 24-hour care in a facility. Lack of long-term care insurance or financial, means patients are caring for family members at home.

## Problem

Early identification of caregiver stress and burden in the non-professional or family role, is necessary to decrease mental and physical harm, due to the burden of caregiving.



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Caregiving, in any environment, is very stressful. We tend to internalize feelings of loved ones (lay caregiver or patients (professional caregiver).

Defined as: Overwhelming feelings of sadness.

## Overview

- Scope of the existing problem
- Literature review
- Solutions
- Support for the caregivers
- Caregiver stress test (we will use in our qualitative research in the future)
- Discuss self-care methods



In this presentation, we will discuss the scope and the existing problem and assess literature, to find solutions and support for the caregivers. We will discuss some of the strategies and review a caregiver stress test, which we will use in our qualitative research in the future. Self-care methods will be discussed.

In addition to questions of what and why, what can we do about this ever growing problem becomes vitally important. How can we help ourselves and those that are also affected by this problem? How do we identify individuals who need our help and the other resources that are available?

We will be discussing several of these questions in this presentation.

## Background

- Compassion fatigue/caregiver stress, is defined as a feeling of overwhelming sadness
- Caregiving is a very stressful and demanding job
- Nurses, professional caregivers, family caregivers are prone to compassion fatigue
- Our aging population requires care by professionals or lay persons (i.e., usually family members)
- Where is support system?
- Family members also risk becoming the patient



Caregiver stress, affects stress markers, known as neuroendocrine (such as cortisol levels) markers, which is a predictor of potential physical and mental issues.

- Compassion fatigue/caregiver stress is defined as a feeling of overwhelming sadness
- Caregiving is a very stressful and demanding job
- Nurses, professional caregivers are prone to compassion fatigue
- Lay caregivers are also prone to compassion fatigue
- Our aging population requires care by professionals or lay persons
- What happens to these families or caregivers? Where is support system?
- Family members also risk in becoming the patient

## Assessment

- Recognition:
  - Changes identified in family daily life and in relationships
  - Loss of freedom causing alterations in social life and interruptions of leisure activities
  - Can cause physical and mental problems



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Caregiver stress/compassion fatigue:

- How extensive is the issue?
- Who is the caregiver?
- Likelihood of caregiver becoming a statistic of illness
- How can nurses help?

Early intervention:

- Reduces cost of the caregivers medical care
- Maintain physical and mental health
- Increase QOL



## Recommendations

- Increase awareness of this important and ongoing issue
- Familiarize healthcare professionals with strategies noted
- Formalize simple questions and observations to identify risk
- Formulate a *caregiver stress test* to evaluate family caregivers burdened with caregiver stress
- Qualitative study to collect data
- Teach caregivers with self-care methods to reduce stress

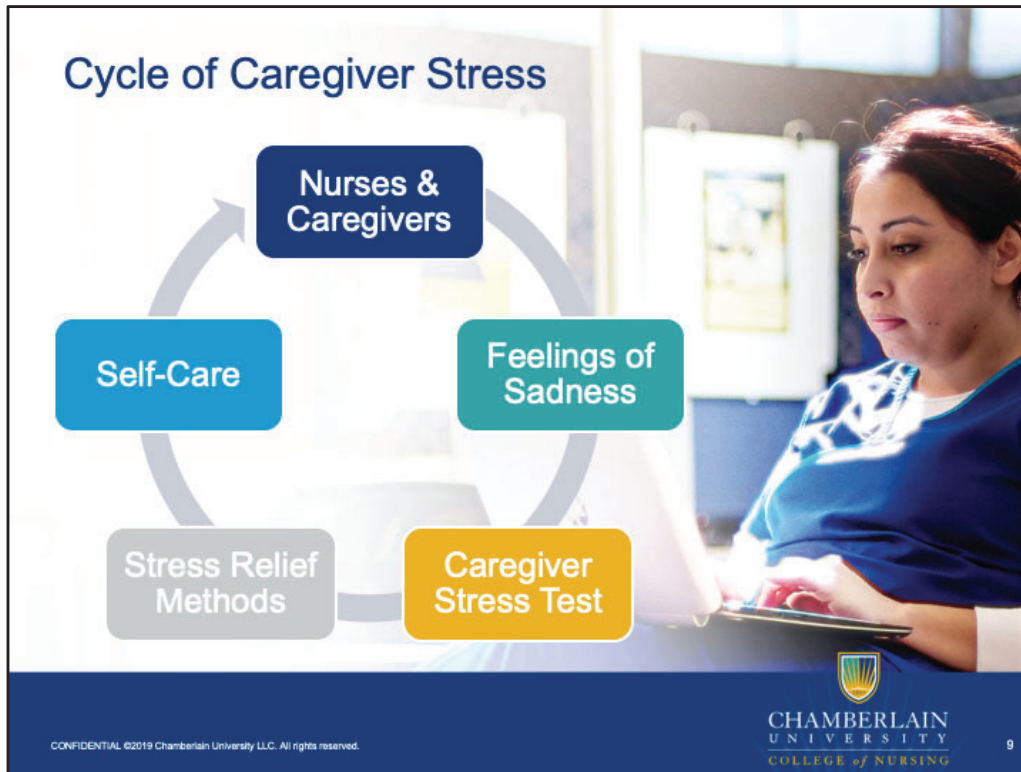


Increase awareness by starting education early for healthcare practitioners by adding to curriculum. Techniques to cope and reduce stress and also recognize this in families and caregivers of patients (older and younger, alike) being cared for at home by family caregiver). Interventions that can help reduce stress include deep breathing, exercise, yoga and other meditation practices.

Interventions are needed to address challenges, before, more stressful situations occurs and before physical or mental problems.

Need to formulate a very simple caregiver stress test, for HCP to administer and arm, with resources for families to further help identify and manage.





Professionals and lay persons can be a statistic of caregiving stress. The feeling is overwhelming and depression, likely will occur along with physical illness. Loss of interest in self and others, may be present and could further deteriorate.

The strategy is early recognition and assistance, in reducing stress burden. Nurses can receive training on modalities to decrease stress early along with training for their nursing degree, as well as in the professional environment. This can help keep nurses healthy both, mentally and physically, while keeping the workforce strong.

Lay person caregivers, may need additional help and resources, to help identify their need early in the caregiving phase. The goal is to keep the caregiver healthy, both mentally and physically, so that they do not become a statistic or patient themselves. A simple stress test identifier that is easily administered will be important in recognition and supply of resources.

Professional healthcare providers and lay person alike, need training on self-care methods, to reduce stress and reduce likelihood of morbidity and or mortality.

## Summary

- Caregivers suffer in silence to the detriment of their ability to experience satisfaction or joy in their lives now and for the future (Lanier, 2017)
- Self-care is very important to physical, emotional and mental stress relief. This information could be added to the nursing curriculum and shared with healthcare staff, to evaluate situations to avoid caregiver burnout in both, professional and non-professional situations



Although most institutionalized care occurs in medical settings such as the nursing home, there has been an substantial increase in caregiving in the non-nursing home setting. Baby boomers who are the largest group today are reaching retirement age. These individuals usually spend many years working and taking care of their own families, while providing care to aging parents, older siblings, spouses and also providing financial assistance or housing needs to their older children.

Healthcare providers, such as nurses, have not been prepared for caregiver stress and burden and are often victims of caregivers at home of their own children, parents, siblings, while also carrying for elderly or institutionalized patients. They have not been taught methods of stress reduction and also do not take time out for themselves for stress reduction resulting in physical and mental distress. This often leads to job burnout and leaving the profession.

Our suggestions for a simple caregiving stress test is only the first step in helping all of these individuals help themselves. Nurses and all healthcare providers, need to recognize stress related illness, situations and when intervention is needed. This benefits everyone.

## References

Lanier, J. (2017). Running on Empty: Compassion Fatigue in Nurses and Non-Professional Caregivers. *Ohio Nurses Review*, 92(6), 21-26.

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# Questions



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Questions?

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Joy Whitlatch, EdD, MSN, RN  
Associate Professor, RN to BSN Option  
[jwhitlatch@chamberlain.edu](mailto:jwhitlatch@chamberlain.edu)

Virginia Hall, DNP, RN, CNE  
Professor, RN to BSN Option  
[vhall@chamberlain.edu](mailto:vhall@chamberlain.edu)