

45th Biennial Convention (16-20 November 2019)

Caregiver Stress and Compassion Fatigue

Joy A. Whitlatch, EdD, MSN, RN

RN-BSN Option Online, Chamberlain College of Nursing, Goodyear, AZ, USA

Virginia L. Hall, DNP, MSN/Ed, BSN, RN, CNE

Chamberlain College of Nursing, Chamberlain College of Nursing, Downers Grove, IL, USA

What is meant by caregiver stress/burden you may be surprised by some of the findings. Often the caregiver may be the unidentified patient. Women are more at risk of developing health issues related to the detrimental effects of caregiver stress/burden. The caregiver and the person receiving care may experience similar stressors leading to many of the same feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, and guilt over their feelings, to name a few.

Nurses and professional caregivers are prone to feeling overly burdened from all of the sad and desperate events they see every day. This has been recognized and even assigned a name “compassion fatigue” (Lanier, 2017). Our population is not only living longer, they are living longer with increased chances of physical and/or mental disability, primarily due to the aging process. This aging process may result in the person needing more assistance with activities of daily living which falls onto the shoulders of their immediate family, often a spouse or adult child. What happens to these families or caregivers? Professionals suffering from caregiving for others have received help and recognition of the problem. This is not the case for non-professionals (Lanier, 2017).

The Family Alliance Caregiving (2017) has called caregiving one of “the most stressful jobs on this earth.” An “emotional roller coaster that never ends” (para 5). Anyone that has experienced this scenario knows that there is little time for oneself. The “job” can be overburdening, overwhelming, and full of unknowns. It is a very scary situation in which family members do not know where and whom to turn to.

In this presentation, we will discuss the scope and the existing problem, and share a caregiver’s stress test that we will use in qualitative research of caregivers in the future. We will discuss some of the strategies noted in the literature to address this problem. We will also share stories of caregivers who have recently experienced this in their own lives and relate how they were able to cope and survive the stress of caregiver burden.

We will then share our *caregiver stress test* to evaluate the burden. Healthcare staff could use this simple test to evaluate family caregivers, with the idea of then giving them tools to relieve stress. Stress relief methods will be discussed and evaluated. Self-care is very important to physical, emotional, and mental stress relief. 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). This information could be added to the nursing curriculum and shared with healthcare staff to evaluate situations so as to avoid caregiver burnout in future situations.

Title:

Caregiver Stress and Compassion Fatigue

Keywords:

compassion fatigue, self-care and caregiver stress

References:

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

Family Alliance Caregiving. (2017). Caregivers Stories. Retrieved from <https://www.caregiver.org/national-center-caregiving-ncc-family-caregiver-alliance-fca>

Doehring, C. (2015). Resilience as the relational ability to spiritually integrate moral stress. *Pastoral Psychology*, 64(5), 635-649. doi:10.1007/s11089-015-0643-7

Penning, M.J., Wu, Z. (2016). Caregiver stress and mental health: Impact of caregiving relationship and gender. *Gerontologist* 6; 56 (6): 1102-1113. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnv038

Webb, R., & Harrison, D.K. (2016). In whose best interests? A case study of a family affected by dementia. *British Journal of Community Nursing*, 21(6), 300-304. doi:10.12968/bjcn.2016.21.6.300

Abstract Summary:

Caregiver stress/compassion fatigue, and how extensive is the issue? The caregiver may be the patient, family, or medical professional. Literature review method will be used to collect data and formulate current evidenced based practice to find self-care methods for surviving and reducing effects of compassion fatigue

Content Outline:**Introduction**

1. Our population is not only living longer, they require more involved care.
2. Caregivers need lessons on self-care and how to care for themselves.

Body

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 noted in the literature to address this problem. We will also review a caregiver stress test that we will use in our qualitative research in the future. Self-care methods will be discussed.

Conclusion

Stress relief methods will be discussed and evaluated. Self-care is very important to physical, emotional, and mental stress relief. 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). This

information could be added to the nursing curriculum and shared with healthcare staff to evaluate situations so as to avoid caregiver burnout in future situations.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Joy A. Whitlatch, EdD, MSN, RN
Chamberlain College of Nursing
RN-BSN Option Online
Associate Professor
Goodyear AZ
USA

Author Summary: Joy Whitlatch, EdD, MSN, RN is an associate professor for the RN to BSN online degree program at Chamberlain College of Nursing, with more than a decade of academic experience specializing in nursing and online education. Additionally, she is an editorial reviewer for journals and conferences and has given numerous professional presentations in the areas of online learning and nursing education.

Second Author

Virginia L. Hall, DNP, MSN/Ed, BSN, RN, CNE
Chamberlain College of Nursing
Associate Professor
Downers Grove IL
USA

Author Summary: Virginia Hall is a professor for the RN to BSN online degree completion option at Chamberlain College of Nursing. She has more than a decade of academic experience to her role and specializes in nursing and online education. Dr. Hall is a member of the NLN and Sigma Theta Tau International.