

Title:

The Struggle Is Real: Understanding and Creating Solutions for Nurse Faculty Burnout

Carolyn (Carrie) J. Lee, PhD, MSN

College of Nursing, University of Toledo, Toledo, OH, USA

Session Title:

Nurse Faculty Burnout

Slot:

F 18: Monday, 30 October 2017: 9:30 AM-10:15 AM

Scheduled Time:

9:50 AM

Keywords:

academic career, burnout and faculty

References:

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Yedidia, M.J., Chou, J. Brownlee, S., Flynn, L. & Tanner, C.A. (2014) Association of faculty perceptions of work-life with emotional exhaustion and intent to leave academic nursing: Report on a national survey of nurse faculty. *The Journal of Nursing Education*, 53(10), 569-579.

Abstract Summary:

Described for decades, burnout remains a real phenomenon for nurses, including those on an academic career path. Case studies of nurse faculty will illustrate the phenomenon, its impact and suggest solutions toward anticipating, avoiding or responding to nurse faculty burnout.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
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The learner will be able to describe the history of burnout, contributing factors, characteristics of burnout and impact on nurse faculty and institutions.	Brief overview of professional literature on burnout in nursing. Identification of academic workplace factors that may contribute to burnout. Outline characteristics of burnout. Commentary on potential impact on individual, peers and institutions.
The learner will be able to construct solutions for faculty experiencing burnout.	Discussion of impact on faculty role and development through case study exemplars. Presentation of individual and administrative strategies to anticipate, avoid and respond to faculty burnout.

Abstract Text:

The purpose of this paper is to describe the concept of faculty burnout and its relevance to nursing education. Case study examples will be shared to articulate contributing factors and suggest proactive and responsive strategies.

From a historical perspective, burnout has been described in the professional literature for decades. Freudenberger (1974) originally described the phenomenon as a state of exhaustion resulting from drained energy, strength and resources. Maslach's (1996) pioneering work led to the development of a burnout inventory that considers emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished sense of accomplishment as characteristic. The concept of burnout, with most of the attention to nurses in practice, appeared in the nursing literature in the 1980's. The topic is still described as burnout and also tied to contemporary language of job satisfaction, compassion fatigue, work stress and work-life quality in publications from various countries. (Sorenson et al, 2016; Vargas et al, 2014; Ayala, 2013; Van Bogaert, 2014; Toh, 2012; Fong, 1993; Dick, 1992). Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach (2009) contend that the phenomenon remains relevant in the 21st century as a product of gaps between work demands and available resources as well as values conflicts between persons and organizations. Burnout can manifest in a variety of ways including sleep changes, appetite shifts, somatic complaints and mood changes – depression, anger, and cynicism. Colleagues might notice forgetfulness, changes in concentration and less social engagement in burned-out faculty peers.

How is it that faculty members with such a passion for nursing and education become burned out? Sarmiento (2004) identified multiple role expectations, increasing work demands with tighter resources, staying abreast of practice and education trends, changing technology and the energy to work with students as risk factors. The pace and resource demands in the higher education setting – larger classes, changing student demographics and behaviors, pressure to do more with fewer resources – could be argued to have only increased. In a recent study of over 3,000 nurse faculty, a full third expressed intent to leave academe and close to forty percent reported high levels of exhaustion with workload and work/family balance as important predictors of exhaustion (Yedidia et al, 2014).

Nurses who pursue an academic career hold a deep passion for our profession and a quest to share knowledge with others. Burnout poses a unique menace to nursing education where the challenges of building and retaining a quality nurse faculty workforce is well documented (AACN, 2015). Undisturbed, burnout threatens the individual faculty member with a loss of focus and reward while the employer risks potential lower employee productivity or their departure. Colleagues miss out on collegial relationships and mentors while students forfeit connections with expert educators and role models.

Nurses who pursue an academic career hold a deep passion for our profession and a quest to share knowledge with others. Both individual faculty and academic administrators have an interest in avoiding and responding to burnout. Meeting the tripartite expectations in teaching,

service and scholarship (and sometimes practice) is not without pressure. Junior faculty benefit from the supportive 'safety net' of those who 'know the ropes for guidance in setting priorities, best using their talents and make strategic choices, especially while on the track to tenure. Formal mentor/mentee relationships can also focus both junior and senior faculty but must be mindful of the different role obligations of both parties. Partnerships and support, such as in a writing group, can help people make progress, engage with others and achieve re-energizing outcomes.

Academic administrators have a special role in the quality of academic work life as faculty transition to and progress in their academic career (Candela et al, 2013). Department chairpersons have a special role in helping junior faculty set realistic goals in the transition to and continuance of an academic career. It is important to complete thoughtful reviews of faculty progress and achievement toward goals but also to be mindful of times when faculty in the department need extra support such as at peak levels in their doctoral study, when approaching tenure timeline or when family needs or crises occur (Lee, 2009). Creating opportunities to socialize and recognize the professional achievements of others can create a culture of engagement reducing tendency of the burned-out faculty to isolate themselves. Administrators must also carefully consider the unique needs of faculty who balance academic role responsibilities while also meeting the role benchmarks of clinical practice appointments (NONPF, 2015a; NONPF, 2015b; Beck, 2013; Bosold, 2012). Inviting those faculty to engage with partnerships blending faculty and APN roles can benefit all involved and build efficiencies in how these faculty use their time and energy. Adjunct faculty who carry heavy teaching loads can miss out on some of internal peer support systems heightening risk for burnout and warrant regular attention from academic administrators including strategies to be involved with others (Bates, 2012).

AACN's Essentials mandate that we build aptitudes in our students to advocate for self, negotiate roles within systems and consider the impact of our well-being on being able to deliver effective care (AACN, 2015; AACN, 2011). Educators are inspired by their role as teachers, have a quest for knowledge and a core commitment to our profession. It is in the best interest of individual faculty and academic administrators alike to hold an interest in avoiding and responding to burnout.