Use of Storytelling to Decrease Stress
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INTRODUCTION OF PROBLEM
Nursing sick and dying patients can be a source of stress and may create the potential for burnout and compassion fatigue (Ko & Kiser-Larson, 2016). Aside from the mental health and wellbeing of nurses, potential outcomes due to stress can include hospitalized patients, long working hours, and increased turnover rate. Stress-reducing interventions have the potential to create positive emotional health, and may create positive patient care outcomes. Storytelling is an important, efficient, and cost-effective intervention to decrease stress.

HOW DID THIS BEGIN?
The Lived Experiences of Nurses Caring for Dying Pediatric Patients (Dissertation Research). Nurses stated there was a lack of supportive care for them after a traumatic event such as patient death. Nurses discussed several potentially unhealthy ways in which they dealt with workplace stress. Further research concluded many workplace settings do not provide stress reduction interventions for hospital staff nurses. This finding led to further investigation of stress reduction interventions. A small study was conducted with pediatric staff nurses using the intervention of storytelling.

MEASUREMENT TOOLS
The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
Stress is a state of being, and a result of exposure to work demands and outcomes (Larjavaara, 2011). Stress-reducing interventions have the potential to create positive work environments, positive emotional health, and in turn, positive patient care outcomes. Lastly, there are several interventions to decrease workplace stress caused by caring for dying patients that have been utilized, however, the intervention of storytelling was researched as the most cost-effective option.

WHAT IS STORYTELLING?
It is a verbal recounting of a perceived event to one or more individuals that share similar ideas. Nurses’ may be able to manage their stress while being provided the opportunity to discuss concerns and simultaneously provide support to other nurses who experience similar events (Cook, et al., 2012; MacPherson, 2008). Through the intervention of storytelling, nurses can create meaning by reflecting on, and make sense of, the experiences they tell about. Storytelling may allow for coping and learning when similar events transpire among individuals.

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The Participants
9 female pediatric nurses working in both a neonatal intensive care unit and an inpatient pediatric unit
Between 29 and 61 years of age
9 were married
7 had children
2 had Associates degrees
4 had Baccalaureate degrees
2 had Master’s degrees
1 had a Doctoral degree
Qualitative data was measured using 3 questions yielding information about stress before the intervention, after the intervention, and how a storytelling helped decrease stress.

The Importance of the Intervention of Storytelling
One feature of storytelling is the creation of dyads and/or small groups who self-identify with co-workers they feel comfortable with and who can provide support. Once the storytelling intervention is understood, the steps that guide the intervention can be used for stress reduction. Nurses who choose to participate and who believe that the intervention will help with their workplace stress levels can utilize storytelling at any time. During the process of storytelling nurses reflect on and make meaning of the experience, justifying fellow nurses’ understanding of each other’s grief and alleviating painful feelings to help nurses transition back into their role (Windemere, 2017).

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
A repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted controlling for age and 
+PSS scores showed a nearly significant decrease from pre-intervention (Estimated Mean = 2.133, SE = .097) to post-intervention (Estimated Mean = 2.127, SE = .131), with the intervention accounting for 41.4% of the variability. In addition, there was also a nearly significant interaction of age X time, which explained another 4.1% of the variability. Given the small sample size the storytelling intervention was significant in decreasing workplace stress levels.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING
Many organizations have not aligned hospital finances, resources, and needs to support a wellness program. If finances are not available, leadership members can be creative in producing programs that require minimal cost and equipment. By encouraging open, trusting communication through support by peers, nurses can maintain the ability to cope with and decrease stress while supporting one another. Nurses can be given the opportunity to share their story, to support a wellness program. Nurses can be given the opportunity to share their story, to support a wellness program. By instituting storytelling as a wellness program nurses will receive the potential for physical and mental illnesses, and eventually a decrease in the quality of patient care (Fathi, et al., 2012; Moustaka & Constantinou, 2011).

Stress-reducing interventions have the potential to create positive work environments, positive emotional health, and in turn, positive patient care outcomes. In addition, there was also a nearly significant interaction of age X time, which explained another 4.1% of the variability. Given the small sample size the storytelling intervention was significant in decreasing workplace stress levels.