Expressive Arts Interventions Used to Address Psychosocial Stress Among Healthcare Professionals: A Systematic Review

Carolyn S. Phillips, MSN, RN
University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing, Austin, TX, USA

Purpose: The rates of burnout and compassion fatigue are increasing among healthcare professionals (HCPs) in many developing countries (Gomez-Urquiza, et al., 2016; Shanafelt, 2015; Wu, Singh-Carlson, Odell, Reynolds & Su, 2016). Burnout and compassion fatigue affect the health of the clinician and also has a direct impact on patient health outcomes (Salyers, et al., 2016). As a result, the National Academy of Medicine called for clinician well-being to be a national priority in the United States and has raised awareness for the need of more research to address components of burnout and high quality intervention studies (Dyrbye, et al., 2017).

Psychosocial stress within the workplace is multifaceted. It is caused by increasing work demands, higher acuity, and staff shortages, but it is also caused by repeated exposure to patient suffering, cumulative patient death, moral distress and a lack of time to address the psychosocial implications of caregiving. Numerous systematic reviews of interventions to prevent burnout and improve well-being among HCPs have been done (Duhoux, Menear, Charron, Lavoie-Tremblay, & Alderson, 2017; Hill, Dempster, Donnelly, & McCorry, 2016; Lamothe, Rondeaua, Malboeuf-Hurtubiseb, Duvala, & Sultana, 2016; Panagioti, et al., 2017; Romppanen & H€aggman-Laitila, 2017), but this is the first to examine expressive arts interventions to decrease workplace stress. There is a growing interest in the impact of arts on well-being and research has shown that engaging in creative activities has a statistically significant impact on cortisol levels (Kaimal, Ray, & Muniz, 2016). Furthermore, the use of storytelling helps connect individuals to the shared humanity, and music can evoke emotions that words alone cannot access (Huet & Holttum, 2016; Phillips & Welcer, 2017). The purpose of this systematic review is to identify and synthesize evidence about the effectiveness of expressive arts interventions used to address psychosocial stress in HCPs.

Methods: A systematic literature search following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines was conducted in the following international databases: SocINDEX, PsycINFO, Pubmed, and CINAHL. A secondary review of the ancestry literature was also carried out. A 20-year timeframe (January 1997 - November 2017) was selected because a review of expressive arts interventions has not been done. Eligible studies included: 1) quantitative or mixed methods intervention studies between 1997-2017 that addressed workplace stress, professional grief, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, or burnout; 2) interventions must utilize the expressive arts (music, poetry, narrative, storytelling, writing, singing, dancing); 3) any HCPs but not students; 4) any healthcare specialty; and, 5) were written in English. The search yielded 249 relevant titles after removing duplicate titles. From the 249 abstracts reviewed, 27 articles were selected for full text review. After full review, an additional 12 articles were removed and 15 relevant studies were selected as the final data. The intervention characteristics, feasibility, outcome measures, and effectiveness were analyzed. The risk of bias was evaluated based on selection, outcome measures, and intervention fidelity.

Results: A total of 917 participants were included in the 15 studies, but the sample size per study varied widely, ranging from 6 to 248 (median, N=30). Eighty percent of the studies (N=12) were conducted within the last 10 years, reflecting the time period of increased burnout and compassion fatigue. The majority of the studies occurred in the United States (N=11), but other countries represented were the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Hong Kong, and Italy. The participants in the studies were predominately female (N=606, 66.1%) and the mean age was 39.29 (range 19-78 years). Nurses were the primary occupation represented (N=536, 59%), and the specialties represented were oncology (N=5), hospice (N=4), and other (N=6; which included a mixture of specialties). The study designs varied and only two were randomized controlled trials. The remaining studies were some variation of a 1-group or 2-group pre-experimental or quasi-experimental study with pre- and post- intervention measures.
The intervention characteristics included 53% art-based, 27% music-based, and 20% used storytelling or narrative. The majority of the interventions occurred in the workplace (47%) and the interventions were facilitated by artists (13%), clinicians or researchers (47%), or clinician/researchers who were also artists (33%). One study was described as peer-led. The length of intervention varied from one hour to 13 weeks, with most lasting six weeks (N=5). Pre- and post-intervention data was collected in all of the studies, but four studies took additional time points. No study provided longitudinal outcomes greater than three months. Three of the programs added a psycho-educational component to the intervention in addition to the expressive arts aspect.

A variety of outcome measures were used, but the most common were burnout, stress, social support, well-being, anger, anxiety, and grief. Burnout and stress showed the greatest statistically significant improvement, and none of the studies that used compassion fatigue and grief as an outcome had statistically significant findings. Overall, the music-based and arts-based interventions had a greater positive impact on well-being, compared to the storytelling and narrative interventions. Of the three studies that used an expressive arts intervention plus a psycho-educational component, two showed statistically significant improvement in burnout.

Conclusions: Compassion fatigue and burnout pose a significant threat to the well-being of the healthcare workforce internationally. Creative expression and art can enhance psychosocial wellbeing and decrease stress. This systematic review provides evidence for the effectiveness of expressive arts interventions, but it should be interpreted cautiously because the methodological rigor of the majority of studies reviewed were moderate to low. More high-quality intervention research is required to improve the work lives and wellbeing of HCPs. The use of arts for healing has global application because the expressive arts intervention can be culturally tailored and relevant.

Title:
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Keywords:
Burnout, Clinical Wellbeing and Expressive Arts Interventions

References:


Abstract Summary:
Burnout among healthcare professionals is increasing and directly impacts patient outcomes. The National Academy of Medicine called for clinician well-being to be a priority in the United States. A systematic review evaluated the effectiveness of expressive arts interventions used to address psychosocial stress. Areas for future research are identified.

Content Outline:
I. Introduction
   1. The rates of burnout and compassion fatigue are increasing among healthcare professionals worldwide.
   2. Burnout and compassion fatigue affect the health of the clinician and also has a direct impact on patient health outcomes.
   3. National Academy of Medicine call for clinician wellbeing to be a national priority.

II. Body
   1. Main Point #1 – Background Literature
      1. Supporting point #1
         1. Causes of workplace stress
         2. Outcomes of workplace stress
      2. Supporting point #2
1. Review previous systematic reviews of interventions used to address workplace stress.
2. Interventions used in systematic reviews
3. Outcomes of systematic reviews
4. No previous systematic review of expressive arts interventions has been done.

3. Supporting point #3
   1. Creativity and Stress
   2. Impact of expressive writing and art on psychosocial wellbeing and emotional outcomes

2. Main Point #2 – Systematic Review of Expressive Arts Interventions
   1. Supporting point #1 – Methods
      1. Research Question
      2. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
      3. Search Engines and Keywords
      4. PRISMA Diagram
   2. Supporting point #2 - Findings
      1. Intervention characteristics
      2. Outcome measures used
      3. Effectiveness of interventions on outcomes
      4. Research quality/Risk of bias

3. Main Point #3 - Discussion of Systematic Review Findings
   1. Supporting point #1 – Discussion
      1. Most used outcome measures
      2. Expressive art intervention and outcomes with most significant improvement on well-being.
      3. Expressive arts intervention plus psycho-educational component
   2. Supporting point #2 - Limitations
   3. Supporting point #3 - Future Research

III. Conclusion

1. Compassion fatigue and burnout pose a significant threat to the well-being of the healthcare workforce internationally.
2. Creative expression and art can enhance psychosocial wellbeing and decrease stress.
3. This systematic review provides evidence for the effectiveness of expressive arts interventions, but it should be interpreted cautiously because the methodological rigor of the majority of studies reviewed were moderate to low.
4. More high-quality intervention research is required to improve the work lives and wellbeing of healthcare professionals.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author
Carolyn S. Phillips, MSN, RN
University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing
PhD Student
Austin TX
USA

Professional Experience: 2002-2011: Oncology Nurse in Oregon, Georgia, and New Mexico 2012-2015: Oncology Nurse Practitioner in New Mexico 2015-2016: Director of Pilot Program: Community Nursing Research Center, Grant funded program from SVH Support 2016: Co-founder of non-profit organization, Songs for the Soul. 2016-present: PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing. Presenter at various regional, national and international conferences. Author or coauthor of 4 publications and/or book chapters primarily relating to cancer, cancer survivorship, and professional grief.
Author Summary: Carolyn Phillips is a board certified Acute Care Nurse Practitioner and an Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner. Currently she is a PhD student at the University of Texas-Austin, School of Nursing, and is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Future of Nursing Scholar. Her research interests include: professional grief, the impact of un-attend grief on the care-giver and care-receiver, and interventions aimed to improve the wellbeing of healthcare professionals.