Creating Moments That Matter: Strategies to Combat Compassion Fatigue

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Understanding compassion fatigue and devising and implementing interventions to address the subject are important for nurses and patients. However, few literature reports exist that address interventions for nurses who experience compassion fatigue. This article discusses how nurses on a medical-surgical oncology unit in an academic, community Magnet™ hospital adopted these themes as a conceptual framework on which to focus actions to avoid and mitigate compassion fatigue.

Moments of Connection and Making Moments Matter

Perry (2008) found that exemplary nurses connected with patients and families, which enabled the nurses to put themselves in their patients’ position; therefore, those nurses gained motivation and energy to offer exceptional care. The second theme in Perry’s (2008) study, making moments matter, showed that nurses value opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with their patients, which led to avoiding compassion fatigue by fully appreciating the significant moments of the nurse-patient relationship.

By the time K.H. was admitted for end-stage care, the staff had already made a connection with him, his wife, and daughters. Although the admissions staff had established meaningful relationships with K.H. and his family, an RN suggested an intervention she believed would enhance the relationships. The nurse’s idea was to place a journal at K.H.’s bedside in which all staff, including physicians, were encouraged to write memories of the humanness of K.H., his established connection and energy to offer exceptional care.