

# Stress, Coping and Resilience of Cancer Nurses at Two Hospitals



**Professor Anne Williams**

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## Nursing a stressful career choice's

Last Updated: 28-10-2014

A survey has made official what the country's nursing sector has known all along – that nursing is one of the most stressful career choices someone can make.

A national survey for Lifetime Australia found that people who work in the health and community services sector are the most stressed out in the country.



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'I'll take competency over compassion'  
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## Exclusive: Stress levels at work making nurses ill, finds survey



More than 60% of nurses say they have such as physical or mental health problems

10 December, 2014 | By Steve Ford

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## Nurses more stressed than combat troops

15 January, 2013 | By Sarah Calkin

Giving nurses protected time to discuss and reflect on practice can more than halve levels of stress and burnout, according to a clinical psychologist who is leading pioneering research into the area.



# ***Causes of Stress in Nurses***

- **High workload** (Purcell, Kutas & Cobb, 2011)
- **Lack of control** (Maben, Adams, Peccei, Murrells & Robert, 2012)
- **Insufficient support** (Bennett, Lowe, Matthews, Dourali & Tattersall, 2001)
- **Co-worker conflict and bullying** (Rocker, 2008)
- **Emotional demands of caring and watching patients suffer** (Kendall, 2007)

# ***Signs of Stress & Burnout***

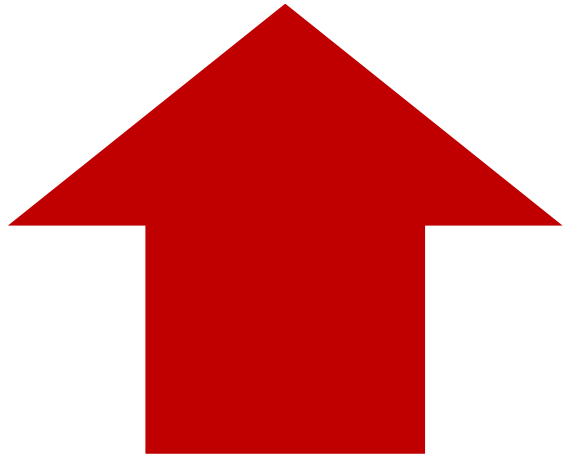


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- Irritability
- Exhaustion
- Poor performance
- Negative emotional reaction to work challenges
- Compassion fatigue
- Unfulfilling work experience
- More sick days
- High staff turnover



# Stress and Psycho- Oncology



Nurse  
Stress



Psycho-  
Oncology

# Cancer Nurse Wellbeing Project: 2015/6



Aim: To develop a wellbeing educational program for cancer nurses intended to increase cancer nurses' wellbeing, resilience and capacity to cope with workplace stress.

# Method



- Action Research
- Two hospitals: one private and one public
- Nurse baseline survey
- Literature review
- Consultative groups
- Development of educational program



# **A Wellbeing Educational Program for Cancer Nurses in WA**



- Effective
- Theoretical base
- Relevant
- Practical Format
- Sustainable



# Baseline Survey



- Three instruments: **Perceived Stress Scale** (S. Cohen & G. Williamson), **COPE** (C.S. Carver), **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale** (K. Connor & J. Davidson).
- Sample population=234 nurses (x 2 hospitals)
- Response rate: 30.3% (**n=71**)
- IBM SPSS version 21 used for the analysis of data.

# Results: Demographics

(missing data 16.4%)



- Gender: 4.1% Male; 79.5% Female
- Age range: 22-64 years
- Position: RNs 74.3%; ENs 8.2%
- Area: Inpatients and Outpatients
- Years as a nurse: New-graduate-41 years



# Results: Stress Levels

- The average stress level across both groups was **16.5**
- Previous research has shown that the typical stress level is about **13**, and that high stress groups record a value of about 20
- Participants who worked a greater number of days reported lower levels of stress (statistically significant).

# Results: Resilience Levels



- The average resilience level across both groups was **70.0**.
- Previous research has shown that average resilience level is **80.4** for the general population, 71.8 for primary care patients, and 68.0 for psychiatric outpatients.
- None of the demographic variables were significantly associated with resilience.

# Results: Coping strategies



## Problem-focused (Cognitive)

Planning (11.5)

Active coping (11.0)

Instrumental social support (10.3)

Suppression of competing activities (9.5)

## Appraisal-focused (Cognitive)

Positive reinterpretation (12.2)

Acceptance (10.3)

Use of humour (8.4)

Religious Coping (6.9)

## Emotion-focused

Use of emotional support (10.7)

Restraint (8.9)

Mental disengagement (8.7)

Venting of emotions (8.6)

Behaviour disengagement (6.2)

Substance use (5.6)

Denial (5.4)

Range of scores 4 – 16

60 questions, 15 coping strategies

# Results: Coping strategies



- Humour and planning were both significantly associated with higher levels of resilience.
- Increased use of social support and higher levels of acceptance were significantly associated with lower levels of stress.
- Higher levels of emotional venting and higher levels of denial were significantly associated with higher levels of stress.

# Summary and Conclusions



- Nurses were found to have high levels of stress and substantial scope for improving resilience was indicated.
- The use of cognitive rather than emotional coping strategies, were indicative of lower levels of stress, consistent with the literature
- These results have confirmed the need for a wellbeing education program for cancer nurses at the study hospitals.



# Work in progress ...



- Analysis of qualitative data from consultative groups
- Development of pilot education program for cancer nurses
- Trial of educational program within the hospital setting
- Exploration of opportunities to incorporate wellbeing education into undergraduate nursing program

# Acknowledgements



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& Celine Fournier

