

PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL COMPASSION TO MITIGATE POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS WITHIN HEALTHCARE CONTEXTS:

Findings from a one-day consultation



The COVID-19 pandemic placed a tremendous strain on hospitals systems and personnel, and has led to an increase of post-traumatic stress among frontline healthcare providers.

Interventions to support the Canadian health workforce are urgently needed.

In November 30th 2022, Dr. Jacqueline Galica and team organized a one-day, in-person consultation with stakeholders across southeastern Ontario to collectively explore **how organizational compassion can be enhanced across healthcare workplaces to mitigate post-traumatic stress.**

The goals of the event were:

1. To examine and reimagine organizational compassion within healthcare workplaces.
2. To develop a plan to use organizational compassion as a strategy to mitigate post-traumatic stress in healthcare.

PARTICIPANTS

30

Representatives across southeast Ontario participated in the event, including people in different roles (e.g., managers, frontline workers, academics), from different disciplines (e.g., nurses, clinicians, physiotherapists) and from different organizations (e.g., Kingston Health Sciences Center, Providence Care, Lennox and Addington County General Hospital, Quinte Healthcare Hospital).



ACTIVITIES

- **In the morning**, participants attended presentations on the significance and impact of compassion, and reviewed previous findings on strategies for organizational compassion.
- **In the afternoon**, groups of 6 or 7 people from different disciplines and organizations discussed their vision for an ideal workplace ('DREAM' ideas) and brainstormed specific actions and strategies to reach their dream workplace ('DESIGN IDEAS'). Groups summarized their ideas onto post-it notes that were placed on the walls for all the attendees to review.

Each attendee voted for two ideas on the wall that they believed require immediate action (**red stickers**) and two ideas requiring a longer-term solution (**blue stickers**).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

'DREAM' IDEAS:

THE IDEAL HEALTHCARE WORKPLACE ...

Practices effective upward communication and engages frontline staff in decision-making

- Frontline staff drive meaningful change: Staff is involved in funding allocation and the renewal or development of policy so that it is realistic and achievable. ●●
- There is transparency in decision-making and reporting. ●
- New employees and staff feel empowered to raise ideas. ●●
- Leaders understand and care about the challenges faced by frontline workers, and co-design solutions with them.

Has highly skilled professionals that work in effective interprofessional teams

- Providers practice to their full scope within an interdisciplinary team; Team members' roles, perspectives and scope of practices are well defined and understood by all. ●
- There is partnership and open communication between healthcare professionals across disciplines. ●
- Provides holistic and equitable care.

Has a culture of wellbeing

- Compassion is a core value of the organization.
- The staff is offered the necessary working conditions to ensure their safety, health and wellbeing.
- There is flexibility and work-life balance integration: For instance, staff have flexible scheduling /shift options and their personal time is respected.
- Staff have reasonable patient loads.
- Staff find a pleasant, safe and efficient environment at their places of work. There is protected and dedicated space for staff to take breaks.
- There is high psychological safety: Everyone feels safe to ask for help. The need for breaks is respected.
- Employees' mental health is a priority.

'DESIGN' IDEAS:

HOW WE CAN GET THERE ...

- ☐ Invest in leadership development training and establish a framework that defines standards for leadership competencies and skills.
- ☐ Open up inclusive channels for upward communication; e.g., set up an internal messaging system where staff can easily and efficiently communicate newly encountered workplace challenges and/or can share ideas.
- ☐ Initiate meaningful conversations that are relevant to the staff and their needs. Work together to find solutions. Include staff in decision-making.
- ☐ Encourage frontline staff to participate in training that will empower creative changes to address workplace challenges.
- ☐ Start initiatives for care providers to understand perspective of different professions: Role shadowing or "day in a life of". ●
- ☐ Promote training and increase funds for staff professional development; support staff in meeting their professional goals. ●
- ☐ Restructure organization for health equity and better unit integration (e.g. invest in quality improvement initiatives, value based care).
- ☐ Ensure appropriate staffing and set minimum nurse-patient ratios.
- ☐ Provide necessary supports as identified by staff, such as unlimited benefits to mental health care services ●, a dedicated space to take breaks and decompress, childcare, free parking, etc.
- ☐ Actionize compassion:
 - Invest in core education about compassion and relationship building for management, decision makers and staff. ●●
 - Encourage self-compassion practices in the units ● such as: creating gratitude trees, celebrating milestones, sharing rewards with your team, rewarding excellence (e.g., golden bed pan award), and creating moments of joy.
 - Have frequent check-ins with staff; Consider setting up a self-compassion buddy system (i.e., pair two team members together to check in with each other and assess needs and levels of stress).
 - Promote and support individual, autonomous strategies and techniques for self-compassion; e.g., meditation might help some to deal with challenging emotions.

● Immediate ideas to be attended (≥ 3 votes)

● Longer term ideas to be attended (≥ 3 votes)

Do you want more information about the consultation day and findings?

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code



Do you have any comments and / or would like to be involved in the future work on this topic?

Click [HERE](#) or scan the QR code



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