



Moral Distress by Staff: My patient is suffering and “we can’t keep torturing them”

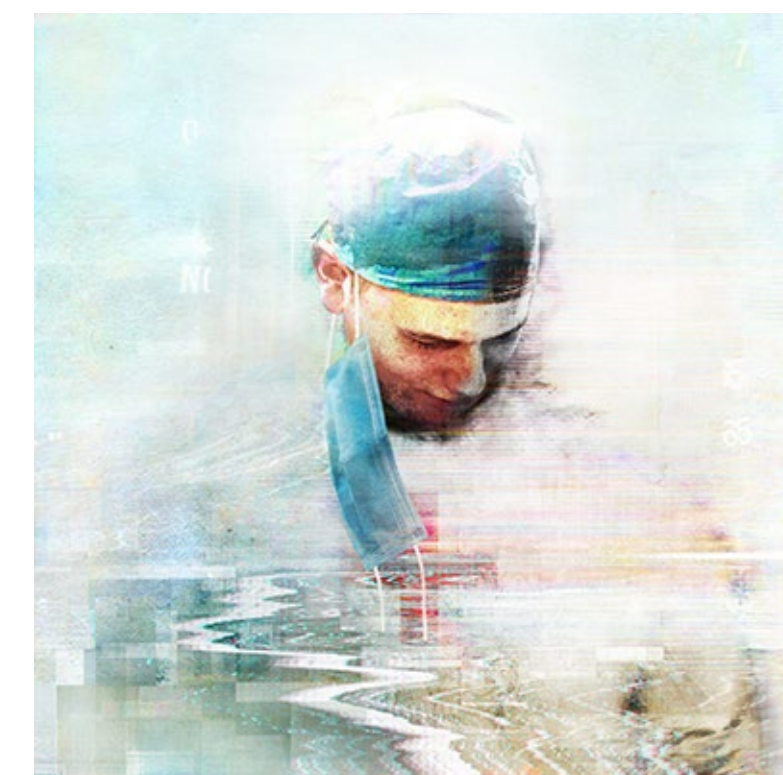
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Statement of the Problem

Moral distress is increasingly recognized as an issue of concern in palliative care and is associated with detrimental outcomes



Background/Literature Review

- Moral distress is an emotional anguish that occurs when an individual feels compelled to act in a manner contrary to their moral values.¹
- Moral distress is prevalent in palliative care professionals perhaps related to continuously caring for patients with serious illness, prevalence of ethical dilemmas, and the responsibility to facilitate complicated care decisions.²
- Consequences of unresolved moral distress include compromised quality of patient care, impaired provider well-being, and organizational challenges.²

Methods

Project Type: Educational project

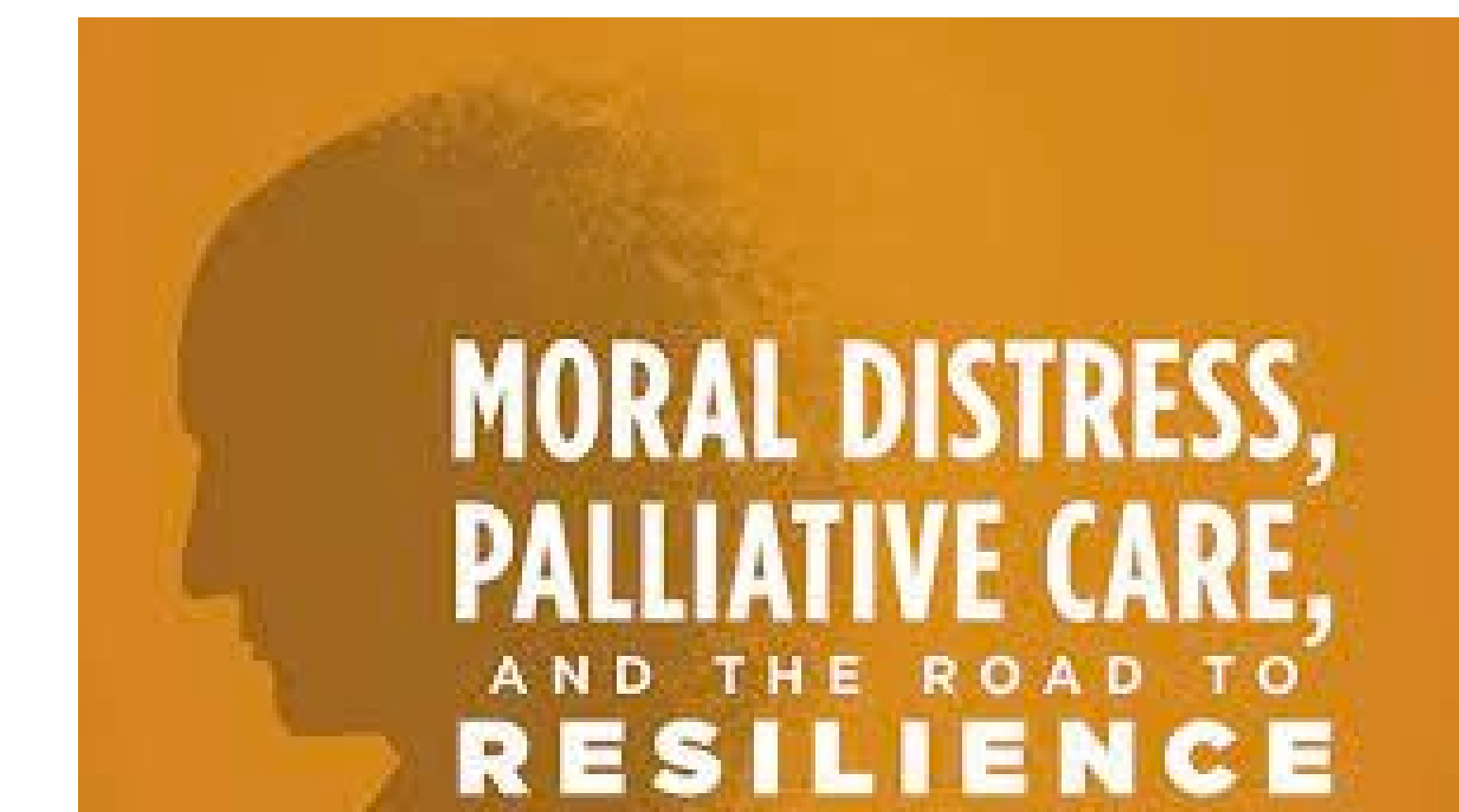
Setting: Evidence-based literature search was conducted, within the last 5 years using the search engines: Ovid MEDLINE, CINAHL, CENTRAL to inform an educational, case-based book chapter in a palliative care text

Population: The palliative care literature on topic of moral distress was reviewed. The textbook is geared toward palliative care trainees and providers.



Conclusions

- There have been substantial efforts to develop meaningful strategies to mitigate or preempt the experience of moral distress.
- Proposed interventions include reflective practice, cultivating moral resilience, fostering collaborative relationships, effective communication, implementation of educational programs, and improving personal psychological empowerment.
- While these approaches offer promising direction, no single intervention has been found to reliably mitigate the detrimental effects of moral distress.



Purpose and Objectives

This project’s purpose is to author an educational, case-based chapter on moral distress for a textbook intended for palliative care trainees and providers.

Specific Objectives:

1. To describe a palliative care clinical case exemplar that gives rise to moral distress
2. To define and differentiate moral distress and burnout
3. To discuss evidence-based approaches to recognize, address, and reduce moral distress
4. To provide an analysis and resolution of the clinical case exemplar

Findings

- It is essential that palliative care professionals have familiarity with moral distress in order to support themselves, their colleagues, and to implement systems level interventions.
- Moral distress is often associated with poor communication among providers, patients, family caregivers, or their surrogates.²
- There are few proven effective interventions for mitigating the effects of moral distress.^{3,4}
- On an individual level cultivating moral resilience has been proposed as a coping strategy.⁵ Future effective interventions should be multidimensional and address the complex root causes of moral distress.

Limitations

The majority of literature evaluating the impact of moral distress in palliative care providers is qualitative with a paucity of high methodological quality trials.

Acknowledgements/References

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